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THE INDEPENDENT

Monday 1 June 1998 45p (IR 50p) No 3,625

Thousands killed as quake hits Afghanistan

By Marcus Tanner

INTERNATIONAL aid agencies were struggling yesterday to reach the remote north of Afghanistan, where an earthquake is thought to have killed thousands of people, hurrying them alive in rubble and landslides.

It was the second disaster to strike the Badakhshan province in only four months. An earthquake in February killed about 4,000 people

and left thousands homeless in freezing temperatures. The latest quake was even worse, said John Lorie, of Merlin (Medical Emergency Relief International), the largest aid agency working in Afghanistan.

"People are still being dug out of the rubble. This was bigger than February, so we are mobilising for a bigger effort," he said. "We are hearing by radio of at least 2,000 dead and 2,000 injured, but this is such a remote area that if it is like the last one, the next few days will reveal many more casualties."

The relief agency said that about 30 villages have been destroyed in Badakhshan province and 20 in the neighbouring Rustaq area – the epicentre of February's catastrophe.

"Some in Rustaq will have been hit for the second time. Four months ago they lost their homes, their relatives, their livestock, only to be hit again."

The 100km-long belt of devastation spans the most inaccessible part of landlocked Afghanistan, at least 100km east of the nearest international airport at Faizabad. There are no roads suitable for vehicles so the only access for medicines and supplies will be by helicopter. The alternative is a three- to four-day trek by donkey.

Spring weather gives some ground for optimism. Now the snows have

melted, aid workers should be able to reach the disaster zone, while homeless Afghans have more chance of surviving in the open than they did in February. Relief operations after the February quake were dogged by the poor weather which prevented aircraft from landing.

The disaster zone is not under the control of the Islamic fundamentalist Taliban government in Kabul, and that may complicate the relief operation.

A spokesman for the anti-Taliban alliance which controls the region said: "We need help desperately. Thousands of people are dead."

Speaking near the border with the former Soviet republic of Tajikistan he said anti-Taliban soldiers had already recovered about 1,700 bodies from the rubble.

Although the Afghan earthquake was powerful, with a magnitude of

about 6.9, the disaster and its predecessor in February do not rank among the most lethal in the world, largely because the mountainous terrain of northern Afghanistan is sparsely inhabited.

About 240,000 were killed at Tangshan, China, in July 1976; 70,000 were killed in northern Peru in May 1970; while the Armenian earthquake of December 1988 claimed some 25,000 victims.

Brown puts poor at top of agenda

By Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

THE REDISTRIBUTION of wealth from rich to poor has been put back at the centre of Labour's agenda in a policy document produced by Gordon Brown and leaked to *The Independent*.

The document provides new evidence of continuing rivalry between Mr Brown and Tony Blair. It underlines the Old Labour credentials which the Chancellor has sought recently to strengthen through closer links with party members and trade unionists.

Labour has also invited businesses to discuss the reforms at a series of seminars in its headquarters in Millbank Tower. They will pay more than £100 each to take part.

Drawn up by a group chaired by the Chancellor, the paper says that in future all public spending decisions must be focused on cutting poverty. It will form the basis of Labour's manifesto on welfare for the next general election.

The document from the party's commission on welfare hints that tax cuts for the middle classes will not be on the agenda. Instead, it promises a better deal for the poorest.

Every Whitehall department must be brought into a crusade to make Britain a fairer place for those who cannot work, it adds.

"Public spending decisions will form part of the Government's overall anti-poverty strategy... All services should be mobilised to tackle poverty – benefits, childcare, health,

housing, social services, employment services, education and transport."

The paper underlines the principles on which Beveridge set up the Welfare State 50 years ago, and says Labour still holds them dear.

"The welfare system has not kept pace with change. As a result, it is failing in its historic mission of creating a fairer and more prosperous society," it says.

The Welfare Policy Commission is chaired by Mr Brown and attended by Harriet Harman, the Secretary of State for Social Security, the Employment Minister Andrew Smith, and several senior trade unionists.

Behind the "big idea" of easing poverty through public spending are a range of new initiatives designed to modernise the welfare system. In future, claimants may be able to apply for benefits via the Internet as well as using websites to search for jobs that might be suitable for them. Front-line benefits staff may also be brought into the policy-making process to inject ideas from the grass-roots of the system.

Labour is also planning two public campaigns. The first will aim to convince people that initiatives to cut benefit fraud are right in principle. Ministers have been stung by the level of suspicion and bad feeling generated by schemes such as the Benefits Integrity Project, under which some disabled people have had their benefits cut.

The second campaign will try to cut levels of teenage pregnancies by improving children's

knowledge of responsible relationships and good parenting.

The change of emphasis underlines a subtle shift since Labour came to power. Two months before the general election David Blunkett, now Secretary of State for Education, said in a lecture that the idea of straightforward redistribution was outdated.

"Any government entering the 21st century cannot hope to create a more equal or egalitarian society simply by taking money from one set of people and redistributing it to others," he said. Last month, though, he praised the Government for what he called a "quiet redistribution" through improved opportunities.

Oce Cabinet source said last night that the change had taken place despite, rather than because of, the Prime Minister's stance on poverty and social exclusion. Opposition to cuts in lone parent benefits, which caused a backbench rebellion last autumn, had brought a change of emphasis, he said.

"The idea that tackling poverty is a key issue for this government is much more prevalent than we thought it might be six months ago... some of this is almost despite the centre rather than because of it. It is surprising for some of us, but certainly genuine."

A senior trade unionist also welcomed the change of stance. "This will give a lot of hope to all the party members who thought Labour had somehow abandoned welfare in the process of reform," he said.

Ed Balls' column, page 19



Gascoigne during the game against Belgium, perhaps his last for England, on Friday Photograph: Ross Kinnaird/Allsport

Gazza out of World Cup

PAUL GASCOIGNE, the talismanic England footballer, last night paid the ultimate price for his controversial lifestyle when he was surprisingly dropped from England's World Cup squad, writes Clive White.

Even though the player has been struggling with his form and fitness in recent months, it was thought that the England coach Glenn Hoddle dare not leave out his most skilful player for the French finals.

Clearly Hoddle was disappointed by Gascoigne's level of performances in the friendlies against Morocco and Belgium in Casablanca last week. The dead-leg injury he suffered against Belgium on Friday was, apparently, not a factor and the reason for his omission was given as "purely a football decision".

Gascoigne, 31, came in for fierce criticism recently when he was photographed out on the town with his celebrity friends Rod Stewart and Chris Evans when it was he should be leading a more disciplined lifestyle.

Also left out the final 22 are Ian Walker (Tottenham Hotspur), Phil Neville and Nicky Butt (both of Manchester United), Andy Hinchcliffe (Sheffield Wednesday) and Dion Dublin (Coventry City).

Sport tabloid, pages 2 and 3

Whitehall funds bid to halt quarry tax

By Michael McCarthy
Environment Correspondent

TWO Government departments are paying for the quarrying industry to mount a public relations campaign later this month designed to stop the Treasury taxing it.

Money from the Department of Trade and Industry and the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions is funding a series of newsletters, an Internet web site and a publicity guide for quarrying companies taking part in Minerals 98, a hectic week of conferences, receptions and open days. The aim is to deliver

the message that digging stone, sand, gravel and clay out of the ground is a good thing.

The campaign is aimed at giving the public a better understanding of minerals and their essential role in our lives – but also, the organisers admit, at proving to the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, that he does not need to impose an environmental tax on the industry.

Such a levy, proposed by Mr Brown in his first budget last July, could take hundreds of millions of pounds from the profits of the big building materials firms such as Tarmac, ARC, Redland and RMC, some of whose shares dipped sharply

the day after the announcement. The industry is going to great lengths to prove it can set its own environmental house in order without the Treasury snapping at its heels.

The industry is getting a significant helping hand from other government departments, acting as the industry's Whitehall sponsors: the DTI is providing £64,000 for the newsletters, the website and a conference, while the DETR is providing £8,000 for a publicity pack sent to all quarry companies, showing them how to organise open days.

"It's quite unacceptable," said Norman Baker, the Liberal Democrat MP for Lewes

whose parliamentary questions brought the figures to light. "This takes the rivalry between the Treasury and other Government departments to new heights. The Government's left hand doesn't know what its right hand is doing."

Minerals 98 was originally conceived of two years ago as a meet-the-public exercise, but the event has taken on new and urgent significance for the quarry companies in the light of the tax proposals. Last July, Mr Brown told the Commons that the purpose of the tax he had in mind, on aggregates – sand, gravel and crushed rock – would be to deter the "significant environmental costs and damage to the landscape" involved in their extraction.

It could do so, economists believe, by encouraging more recycling, and also by raising the basic price of aggregates, which environmentalists contend are ludicrously cheap. The Government is pressing ahead with research and by the end of the year will indicate whether it will go ahead with an aggregates tax.

Not the least of its attractions for the Treasury is that, whether or not it succeeded in changing the behaviour of the quarrying industry, it would still raise huge sums to revenue.

Quarry fear, page 20




In brief

Sinn Fein snub
GERRY Adams and Martin McGuinness rejected an invitation from the Government to a garden party because the guest of honour is to be the Prince of Wales. Page 2

So-long Spice
GINGER Spice really has abandoned Baby, Posh and Sporty – because of "differences between us", she said. The loudest Spice Girl is going solo. Rosie Millard, Page 14

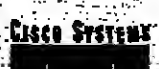
INSIDE GUIDE: WEATHER, P2 • CROSSWORDS, P20 AND EYE P10 • TODAY'S TELEVISION, EYE P12 • FULL CONTENTS, P2



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This is the door the builders put in

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مكتبة من الأدب

TOMORROW

■ Alternative medicine:
Britain's leading expert provides a guide to what really works

Phil Hammond:
on the patients who take it all very seriously



■ Digital age:
a sneak preview of the new radios designed for the BBC

NETWORK+

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Recycled paper made up 41.4% of the raw material for UK newspapers in the first half of 1997.

Railways swamped by moans

By Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

MORE than 650,000 passengers complained about their rail journey on Britain's privatised network last year, according to industry documents obtained by *The Independent*.

The figure, which works out at nearly 1,800 letters a day, was computed for the first time for the Rail Regulator's office. It is in stark contrast to the hitherto "official" number of passenger complaints, which last year was said to be just 9,753.

Rail campaigners were "astonished" by the volume of letters the industry receives. "The amounts are staggering," said Jonathan Bray, campaigns director of Save Our Railways. "It shows a passenger rebellion is under way. Rail users are not prepared to put up with an industry which since privatisation seems more concerned with corporate hype than running the trains on time."

The study, which names the most moaned-about rail companies, is set to be released by John Swift QC, the regulator, later this month.

Topping the list is Richard Branson's Virgin West Coast service, with nearly 120,000 complaints. The line has suffered from spectacularly poor punctuality. Until recently, nearly a fifth of trains were "officially" late.

Crammed carriages are also proving to be a problem. More than 85,000 passengers on Great North Eastern Railways (GNER) complained in the last 12 months. Overcrowding is so bad on the line that executives have asked the Government to extend their licence so they can buy new trains to meet the "unexpected" demand.

South West Trains, which cancelled hundreds of trains last year after sacking too many drivers, gets more than 32,000 complaints a year.

Connex South Eastern, one of the key London commuter

services, received 24,000 letters from the travelling public.

The former InterCity services were the target of most passengers' ire. Chris Garnett, managing director of GNER, says that long-distance journeys recorded more complaints because customers are "incentivised to do so". "If there is an incident and we know a train is late, we have squads of people who turn up at stations with coffee, mobile phones for people to use and also pre-printed 'complaint forms' for passengers to fill in. Just by doing that you invite half a thousand so-called complaints," said Mr Garnett.

OFF TRACK

Company	Complaints
Virgin West Coast	119,000
Great North Eastern	86,000
Virgin CrossCountry	74,000
Great Western	63,000
SWT	32,000
Anglia	28,000
Northern Spirit	27,000

Brian Barrett, chief executive of Virgin Trains — whose two rail franchises together receive more than 500 letters a day — says the company has a team of people working in a "24-hour operation" to cope with the demand. But Virgin says the figures must be put into "context". "We run about 25 million passenger journeys on our service every year — so the number of complaints is relatively small," explained Mr Barrett.

Some rail companies argue they encourage people to write in. Silverlink, which runs services from London to Birmingham, gets 12,000 letters a year. "It is marketing information for free," said company spokesman Graham Bashford.

Until now, the only official statistics have been the total number of complaints collected by passenger watchdogs — not the sum made to train companies directly. Last year, this total stood at 9,753.



A policeman falls injured during clashes in the Garvaghy Road area of Portadown on Saturday. Rioters threw petrol and blast bombs during six hours of disturbances and police responded with plastic bullets. Stephen Davison/Pacemaker

Anger as Sinn Fein leaders snub invitation to royal party

By Clare Garner

THE LEADERS of Sinn Fein have rejected an invitation from the Government to a garden party where the guest of honour is to be the Prince of Wales, whose great uncle, Lord Mountbatten, was killed in an IRA bomb attack in 1979.

Gerry Adams, president of Sinn Fein, and Martin McGuinness, the party's chief negotiator, declined because the heir to the throne is the Commander-in-Chief of Britain's Parachute Regiment. Republicans have always reviled the regiment for its involvement in "Bloody Sunday" when British troops killed 14 Catholics during a protest in Londonderry in 1972. About 1,000 guests, includ-

ing the 18 Northern Ireland MPs, have been invited to this week's garden party at Hillsborough Castle. The event is one of the major dates in Northern Ireland's social calendar. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mo Mowlam, said that she had included the two leaders of the IRA's political wing on the guest list because they had signed up to the peace accord.

However, she had known there was a strong possibility that they would turn down the invitation, saying before receiving their replies: "They are republicans, they are not supporters of the monarchy." Mr Adams and Mr McGuinness have never taken up their seats in the House of Commons be-

cause they refuse to swear allegiance to the crown.

The decision to invite the two Sinn Fein MPs angered many Unionists and Opposition MPs. Ulster Unionist MP Ken Maginnis said: "I believe this is yet another insensitive decision by Mo Mowlam." Andrew Hunter, vice-chairman of the Tory backbench committee on Northern Ireland, said: "These men are apologists for the murderers of the Prince of Wales's uncle. It is dreadful that the Sinn Fein leadership should be given the mantle of respectability when no weapons have been decommissioned."

Andrew Mackay, shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, said: "The simple truth is that an invitation like this puts

the fear of God into the Unionist community. And the danger is they will react by actually electing Unionist politicians who will be there to wreck or disrupt the assembly which will not be in the interests of a lasting settlement."

Fifteen police officers and four civilians were injured on Saturday when rioting erupted in the Garvaghy Road area of Portadown, during an Orange Order march.

At one stage during the six hours of disturbances, a mob of up to 400 rioters attacked officers with petrol and blast bombs. Police responded by firing plastic bullets. It was the first major outbreak of street disorder since the Good Friday peace agreement.

Hague's victory for euro sceptics

By Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

WILLIAM HAGUE won a victory on Europe last night after Conservatives chose a series of MEP candidates who had promised to support his sceptical line on the single currency.

Although many of the chosen candidates may be "Euro-positive" at heart, most have now pledged not to campaign against their party in next year's elections to the European Parliament.

The news may infuriate some pro-European Conservatives such as Kenneth Clarke and Michael Heseltine, and could act as a spur for a breakaway group to set up its own slate of candidates.

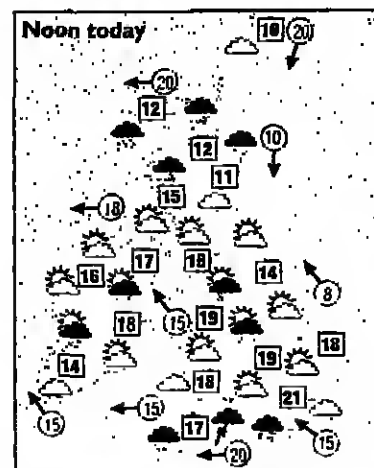
In the Southern region, the six candidates chosen for the party's slate under a new proportional system all made public declarations of support for their party leader.

Four of those six — James Provan, Tom Spencer, Roy Perry and James Elles — were already MEPs, but one member, John Stevens, failed to make the list after refusing to promise support in the campaign for Mr Hague's anti-Euro line. Two other candidates, the former Brentford and Isleworth MP Nirj Deva and a *Daily Telegraph* journalist, Daniel Hannan, are both considered Euro-sceptic.

Mr Stevens said afterwards: "This is an extremely good result for William Hague. He now has a team of MEP candidates who, while representing a broad spectrum of views on Europe, generally are all united against the single currency." However, some pro-European Conservatives were also positive. Ian Taylor, the MP for Esher and Walton who resigned from his party's front bench over the issue, said the party candidates' lists showed "a very positive European flavour."

The party was earlier forced to deny it had a hand in the surprise failure of several prominent Euro-sceptic former MPs including the ex-Chancellor, Norman Lamont, to get as far as the hustings.

WEATHER



Rather warm again, but unsettled. Rain and hill fog affecting the northern half of Scotland will very slowly peter out, but further rain (with local thunder) is expected to spread across southern England and south Wales during the day. Most other parts of the UK will have a day of sunny spells and scattered sharp showers after the clearance of early-morning fog patches. The wind will be a light easterly, which means that North Sea coasts will have a cool onshore breeze.

Outlook for the next few days
The next few days will bring outbreaks of showery rain to most parts and it will become colder for a time especially in Scotland and Northern Ireland with a strong northerly wind. Drier and much brighter weather should return by Thursday with light winds and some warm sunshine in most regions, and this fine weather is expected to last until Friday in Scotland although a brisk east wind will pick up during the day.

British Isles weather

Most recent available figure at noon local time
Celsius: Clear: Fair: Fog: Heavy Rain: Thunder: Snow: Sleet: Shower: Strong Wind: Thunder

Aberdeen	C 10.50	G 10.50	F 17.63
Anguon	C 14.57	L 14.57	R 10.50
Ayr	R 11.52	I 11.52	F 16.64
Belfast	C 12.54	J 12.54	S 14.57
Birmingham	C 15.59	J 15.59	S 17.63
Blackpool	C 13.55	L 13.55	R 15.59
Bournemouth	C 16.61	L 16.61	R 15.59
Brighton	C 15.59	M 15.59	R 14.57
Bristol	F 17.63	N 17.63	D 11.52
Cardiff	F 15.59	O 15.59	C 17.63
Cardle	R 14.57	P 14.57	S 15.59
Dover	C 18.64	S 18.64	F 13.55
Edinb	R 13.55	S 13.55	F 17.63
Edinburgh	R 13.55	S 13.55	F 17.63
Exeter	C 15.59	S 15.59	F 10.50
Glasgow	R 14.57	Y 14.57	C 15.59

Air quality and Pollen

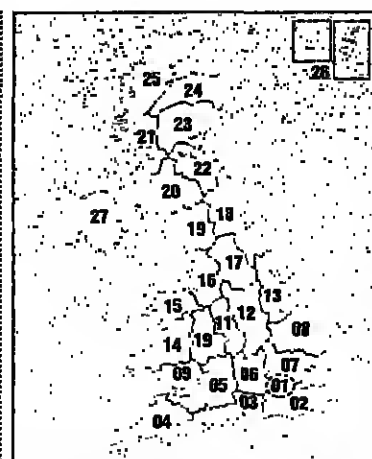
Yesterday's readings	NO ₂	PM ₁₀	O ₃	CO
London	Mod	Low	Mod	Mod
England	Mod	Low	Mod	Mod
Wales	Mod	Low	Mod	Mod
Scotland	Mod	Low	Mod	Mod
N Ireland	Mod	Low	Mod	Mod

Outlook for today

London	Mod	Low	Good	Good
England	Mod	Low	Good	Good
Wales	Mod	Low	Good	Good
Scotland	Mod	Low	Good	Good
N Ireland	Mod	Low	Good	Good

Out and about with AA Roadwatch

Call 0336 401777 for the latest local and national traffic news. Source: The Automobile Association. Calls charged at 50p per min at all times (inc VAT).



INDEPENDENT Weatherline

For the latest forecasts, call 0891 5009 followed by the two digits for your area indicated by the above map. Source: The Met Office. Calls charged at 50p per min at all times (inc VAT).

High tides	AM	HT	PM	HT
London	07.15	8.7	19.29	6.3
Liverpool	04.29	8.2	17.03	7.8
Avonmouth	12.40	10.6	00.57	10.5
Hull (Albert Dock)	11.42	7.7	00.28	7.2
Greenock	05.29	3.3	18.27	2.9
Dun Laoghaire	05.12	3.8	17.59	3.5

Lighting-up times

Belfast	21.43	to	04.54
Birmingham	21.40	to	04.50
Bristol	21.18	to	04.50
Cardiff	21.50	to	04.30
Glasgow	21.08	to	04.49
London	21.27	to	04.46
Manchester	21.34	to	04.34
Newcastle	21.34	to	04.34

Sun & moon

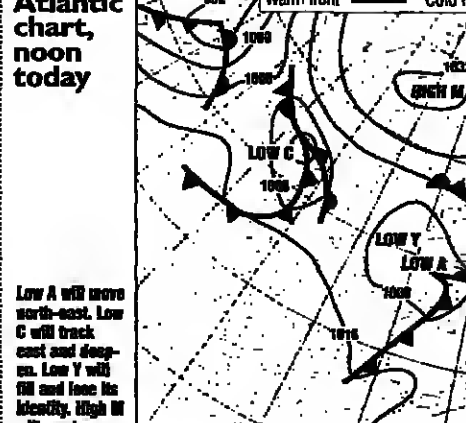
Sun sets: 04.49
Sun sets: 21.08
Moon rises: 11.54
Moon sets: 01.29
First quarter: June 2

World weather

Most recent available figure at noon local time

Alexandria	C 23.73	D 23.73	F 19.66
Algeria	C 25.77	G 25.77	J 23.80
Amman	C 25.77	H 25.77	J 23.80
Ankara	C 25.77	I 25.77	J 23.80
Antwerp	C 17.63	J 17.63	S 14.57
Athens	C 14.57	K 14.57	S 14.57
Auckland	C 17.63	L 17.63	S 14.57
Bahia	C 17.63	M 17.63	S 14.57
Bangkok	C 25.77	N 25.77	S 14.57
Batavia	C 25.77	O 25.77	S 14.57
Bombay	C 25.77	P 25.77	S 14.57
Buenos Aires	C 25.77	Q 25.77	S 14.57
Burkina Faso	C 25.77	R 25.77	S 14.57
Burundi	C 25.77	S 25.77	S 14.57
Calcutta	C 25.77	T 25.77	S 14.57
Cardiff	C 15.59	U 15.59	S 14.57
Cardle	R 14.57	V 14.57	S 15.59
Dover	C 18.64	W 18.64	F 13.55
Edinb	R 13.55	X 13.55	F 17.63
Edinburgh	R 13.55	Y 13.55	F 17.63
Exeter	C 15.59	Z 15.59	F 10.50
Glasgow	R 14.57	AA 14.57	C 15.59

Atlantic chart, noon today



Low A will soon move north-west. Low C will track east and dissipate. Low Y will move south and dissipate. High M will weaken, but stay in situ.

MICHAEL HANLON WEATHER WISE

IT SEEMS that if you really want to avoid being struck by lightning, you should head out to sea. A new Nasa satellite which is able to observe the intensity and frequency of electrical storms has found that between 85 and 90 per cent of lightning strokes occur on land — which forms only one third of the Earth's surface.

The Lightning Imaging Sensor has also given the first accurate measurement of how much electrical activity there is going on over the Earth in total; the satellite, which has been operating for three months, found that on average there are 2,000 thunderstorms at any one time, producing worldwide, about 100 lightning strokes a second. In intense storms, inter-cloud and intra-cloud lightning strokes may outnumber cloud-to-ground strokes by 30-to-1.

So why are thunderstorms so much more common over land? The generator that produces the electrical fields necessary for a thunderstorm is the upward convection of air, and convection tends to be greater over land than over the sea. This is because the land tends to warm up far faster than open water, and it is only when the surface becomes much warmer than the overlying air that convection can occur.

Convection causes movement and collisions of ice particles within a thundercloud, and it is this friction that is believed to generate the electrical charges that turn into lightning, just as friction between your hair and a comb can generate an electrical charge. Updrafts and gravity separate the charged particles, with negative ones sinking to the bottom of the cloud and positive charges rising to the top. This creates enormous electrical potential within clouds, and between clouds and the ground, that can suddenly discharge as lightning.

"We have cashflow problems. Every day cash flows right out of the door."

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كانا من الاصل

Most people sacrifice their home lives for their jobs and half regret it. Can this last?

New research says that the way we work has too high a price and it must change. Roger Trapp and Barrie Clement report

THE overwhelming majority of British workers make sacrifices at home for the sake of their careers with half regretting missing their children growing up or putting work before home or family, new research says.

And a separate report for Opportunity 2000, the campaign to promote women in the workforce, shows that almost half of female senior managers have rejected promotion - or failed to apply for it - because of the pressure it would have put on their family relationships.

The larger study, covering male and female employees of various ages and levels of responsibility, also reveals personal sacrifices ranging from divorces and being absent from partners during serious illness to missing school fairs and not spending enough time on leisure or hobbies.

One in ten of the women interviewed said they had postponed or forgone having children for the sake of the job and women were twice as likely as men to have difficulties forming relationships because of their work.

With what the researchers admit were surprising response levels among men, the survey puts renewed pressure on businesses and other organisations to move to break the "long-hours culture" and introduce new ways of working, or lose the people on whom they depend for future success.

There is already growing evidence that young people at the start of their careers are not prepared to make the sorts of sacrifices that previous generations have made. A much-quoted finding of research among business graduates by the accountants Coop-



Esther Kaposi with Mally, two, Tabitha, five weeks, and nanny Sarah. A director at PowerGen, she says her senior position makes it easier for her to tailor her day to suit her timetable than it would be for someone lower down an organisation (see interview below)
 Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

And, while only 28.1 per cent of senior managers and directors see workload as a growing factor in staff turnover, 40.5 per cent of middle managers do.

Top of employees' wish list of things that could make a difference is working fewer hours. This is followed by changing the company culture, working flexible hours, reducing or avoiding commuting, working from home, changing jobs or relocating, getting more staff, earning more, retiring and reducing stress.

The smaller survey for Opportunity 2000, prepared by Ashridge Management College, covered 176 managers representing an equal number of men and women.

Both men and women said that the difficulty of balancing home and work was the biggest problem when accepting a senior appointment. Some 79 per cent of women felt it was the biggest drawback and 67 per cent of men did so.

However, while one in ten women listed long hours as a reason for rejecting promotion, not one man indicated it was an important issue. And in high-flying couples, more than 43 per cent of women had either rejected promotion or failed to apply for it for fear of damaging their "dual career" relationships, while only 6 per cent of their male partners had suffered from the same sensitivities.

But Ann Chant, director of Opportunity 2000, believes that attitudes are changing. She points out that the very youngest men are as concerned as their partners that promotion might sour their love lives.

■ The WJD report is available priced £37. 0181 324 5553.

Leading article, page 14

ers and Lybrand was that they were prepared to put their personal lives before their careers, while the author Bruce Tulgan, who is an expert on the so-called Generation X, argues that employers cannot expect such employees to work in the same ways as their predecessors.

WJD, the international consultancy specialising in advising employers on

these issues, conducted "the great work/life debate" with the magazine Management Today. Liz Bargh, chief executive for the United Kingdom, said: "The report sends a clear signal - our present way of working is unsustainable, the cost is too high, in human terms and in business terms. Business will have to work with employees to balance work and life for

compassion and competitiveness." As she did in her previous role as director of Opportunity 2000, Ms Bargh stresses that there is a "business case", rather than just a moral reason for change.

The survey of 5,500 people finds that 46 per cent of workers find it hard to meet both their personal and work commitments, with women

suffering most - 61 per cent of them say they have less and less time for themselves. One in three women would take a pay cut in order to gain more time for family life.

For most people, personal life comes before their career, with only 28 per cent getting most satisfaction from work.

Among managers, 67 per cent say

they are expected to ask more and more of their staff and 34.5 per cent feel they often push them too hard. And that pressure is taking its toll on organisations - with 32.4 per cent of respondents saying that work/life pressure is a prime cause of staff turnover. The figure is more than 40 per cent for public-sector and larger organisations.

'I just couldn't bring this baby into the same pressurised environment as my other sons'

Manager turned father and porter

PAUL GIGGLE, 47, of Happisburgh in Norfolk used to be in charge of 300 employees in a mechanical engineering factory. He put in a least 60 hours a week and says he had virtually no contact with his two older children until they were four.

"I hardly saw my children when they were younger. I never changed their nappies, I never fed them. I never got up in the night when they were crying because I was always exhausted from the day's work."

"I had a 45-minute journey each way and two evenings a week and all Saturday afternoon I was playing football as a semi-professional. Basically, I was never there which was awful for the whole family."

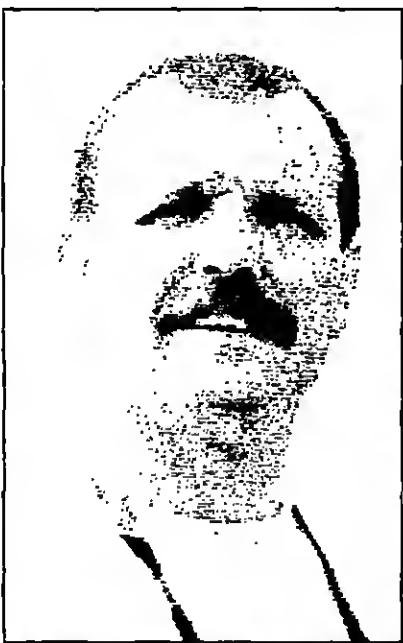
Mr Giggle says his sons, now 31 and 23, missed out on having a father but he was a slave to the wage.

"You have the mortgage to meet and all your other financial commitments and the overtime paid very well," he said. "The only time we would all get together was for Sunday dinner. It didn't only affect my children, it affected me and my first wife."

Although he remarried, Mr Giggle's life did not change. "My stepdaughter was the probably the only three-year-old able to order an Indian takeaway. My second wife, Debbie, also had a very demanding job so we ended up eating out six nights a week."

It was not until his son Charlie was born five years ago that Mr Giggle decided to have a radical work-life change.

"Even before Debbie became pregnant, we both decided that things had to be different," he says. "I wanted to make up for



Five years ago, Paul Giggle decided he needed a radical work-life change

all the things I didn't give to my other sons. I just couldn't bring this baby into the same, pressurised environment."

In 1992, Giggle took voluntary redundancy and became a house husband. "It was the best decision I ever made in my life," he said. "I had to leave my job because there was no way the company would have been open to flexible working options."

Now Charlie has turned five, Mr Giggle works as a night porter, a job which allows him to sleep during the day while his son is at school.

"I don't think I'll ever go back into engineering," he said. "It is too pressurised and I don't want to give up what I've got."

Director helped by nanny and parents

ESTHER KAPOSI, of London, is a 38-year-old mother of two and director of corporate affairs for PowerGen. Although currently on maternity leave with her five-week-old baby, Ms Kaposi intends to go back to work full-time.

On an average working day, Ms Kaposi leaves the house at 8am and returns around 7pm. "I have a full-time nanny who comes to our house and my parents live nearby which is very helpful," she said. "My husband works from home which means his hours are more flexible than mine. It is definitely easier for me to work with two small children than it is for some other mothers."

Ms Kaposi believes people in senior positions have an easier time balancing their home and work lives because they can tailor the day to suit their own timetable.

"I'm not one of those people who stays at work just to be seen," she said. "If I need to do a longer day because of a particular project then I will because it will probably be something that motivates me. But you don't need to work long hours to get on."

Her fine balancing act is, she says, down to effective time management. "To be successful I think you need to manage your time well at work and at home. My elder daughter has a sleep in the afternoon and doesn't go to bed until 8pm, so I try to be at home for then. If I'm not home in time I will speak to her on the telephone."

"My situation is not ideal but it is not awful, although I'm always going to remain flexible and keep an open mind about the way I work. I am not going to close off the down-shifting option."

Go ends 'introductory' £100 flights

GO, the new European low-fare airline launched by British Airways just over a week ago, put up some of its cheapest tickets by 20 per cent and announced the end of its flat fare of £100 return on all seats yesterday, writes Randeep Ramesh.

The airline said the original offer was only "introductory" adding it would continue to sell some seats at rock-bottom prices as part of a new fare structure. That will mean the cheapest return tickets on Go flights

from London's Stansted to Milan and Copenhagen will remain at £100, but those travelling to Rome will have to pay at least £120 for a round trip.

Go's moves are part of the airline's attempt to quickly establish itself as a recognisable name. It is believed Go will soon launch another batch of routes from London to Germany in the next few months and then make inroads into popular European destinations such as Amsterdam and Barcelona. A spokesman

for the airline was not willing to say how many seats would be available at the lowest price. "It will vary from city to city," said Jamie Bowden, a press officer with Go's parent company BA.

This sees the end - just 10 days after the carrier was launched - of the revolutionary "one-price-for-all-seats" approach pioneered by Go.

Other low-cost airlines openly advertise "staggered" seat prices. The lowest single fare for easyJet's London to

Athens route is £69, but passengers can pay £159 for the most expensive seats.

Go will mimic this. Higher prices will be charged in increments of £10 according to availability on its fleet of 148-seat Boeing 737-300 aircraft. David Magliano, sales and marketing director, said: "The number available on each flight varies but we think we will have more seats on our aircraft at the lowest price than any of our competitors".

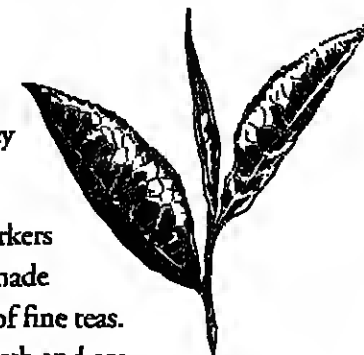
Leading article, page 14

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Black and white issue that blights Britain's race laws

By Ian Burrell
Home Affairs Correspondent

A RADICAL shake-up of Britain's race-relations laws is being demanded to make it illegal to insist on casting only white actors in a Shakespeare play or employing only Asian waiters in a tandoori restaurant.

Under exemptions included in the Race Relations Act 1976, it is still permissible to refuse to employ someone on the grounds of race if an employer believes that such discrimination is necessary for "authenticity".

This means that restaurant employees, actors and artists' models, who are refused work because of their race have no recourse to the law.

But Sir Herman Ouseley, the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, has asked Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, to scrap the exemptions as part of a review of Britain's race-relations legislation.

In a paper sent to the Home Office and seen by *The Independent*, Sir Herman says that "important weaknesses" remain in the 22-year-old Act.

He writes: "Inequality, prejudice and racial discrimination have shown great staying power as institutional complacency continues to stand in the way of action."

The commission hopes that the changes will be incorporated into amendment legislation due to be announced in the Queen's Speech in October.

The removal of the exemptions is intended to create a level playing field so that any individual could apply for any position irrespective of race. The only remaining exceptions



would be where the "particular racial group of the job-holder is an essential defining feature", such as an actor playing Sir Winston Churchill or Nelson Mandela. The paper stresses: "The new formulation... would not enable only white actors to be recruited for a production of *Hamlet*."

People providing "personal services" for a particular racial group such as, say, a Bangladeshi youth worker would also be exempted from the legislation.

But those providing non-personal services, such as meals on-

wheels staff, or shoppers for the elderly cannot be chosen on race grounds, under the new proposals.

In the past, some local authorities have bowed to the wishes of people who ask not to be sent community care workers of a different ethnic group.

The commission also wants to amend a section of the Act which allows people to discriminate on race grounds when appointing partners to partnerships of less than six people. The paper states: "This affords entrants to a range of professions including general medical

practice, accountancy, solicitors, within all of which complaints of racial discrimination in relation to becoming a partner exist."

The commission is angry that it has not been able to fulfil the investigative role that the 1976 Act intended it to carry out.

A court challenge led to a House of Lords ruling in 1984 which meant that the commission could only investigate companies or institutions where it had prior evidence of racial discrimination.

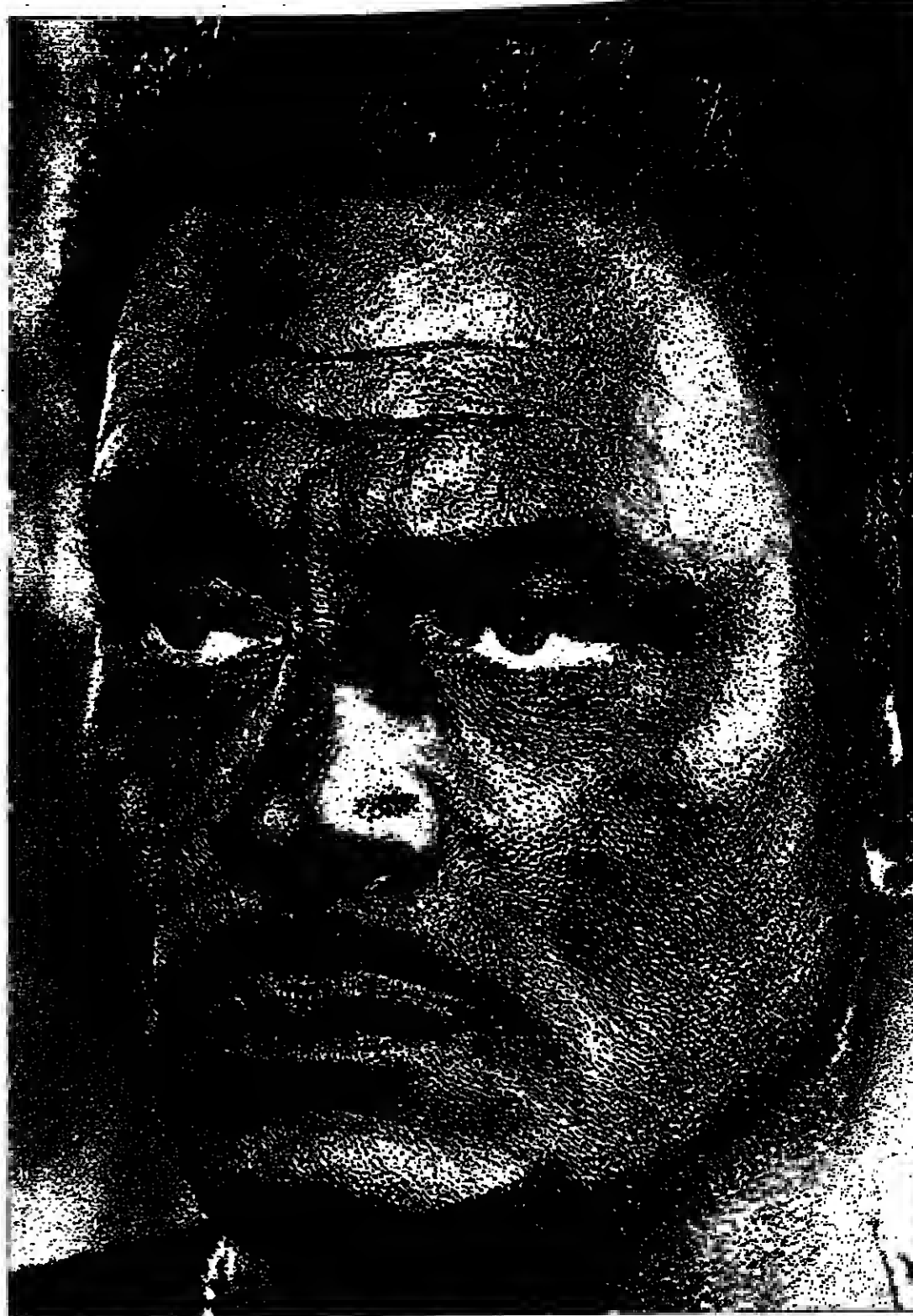
Sir Herman feels that the ruling has forced the commission down a path of confrontation whereby its only option is to tackle discrimination in the courts and tribunals rather than through negotiation.

"It should be onambiguously stated in the Act that the commission may conduct a formal investigation - either wide-ranging or confined to a particular organisation or individual - on its own initiative for any purpose connected with the carrying out of its functions," the paper states.

"The commission should not be required to obtain and produce evidence of unlawful racial discrimination before embarking on an investigation."

The commission also wants a change to be introduced to the legislation to enable servicemen and women to be able to complain directly to an industrial tribunal. They currently have to apply in the first instance to the service's internal complaints procedure.

A Home Office spokesman said: "We have received a number of suggestions and the Home Secretary is prepared to consider whether there is a case for any amendments to the Race Relations Act."



Laurence Olivier (above) as Othello and Denzel Washington (above left) in *Much Ado About Nothing* - exceptions to the rule under current legislation

Indonesia receives 1300,000 in army aid

Morning-after pill should be sold over the counter, say campaigners

By Cathy Cornerford

THE morning-after pill should be sold over the counter in an effort to reduce the escalating number of abortions and unwanted teenage pregnancies, campaigners believe.

The Birth Control Trust, with the backing of MPs, peers and family planning groups, is pressing for the contraceptive to be taken off the prescription-only medicines list.

Britain currently has the worst record in Europe for unwanted teenage pregnancies,

with 7,500 under-16s becoming pregnant each year, half of whom have abortions.

Lack of awareness and difficulty getting hold of the drug account for much of the problem, according to Ann Furedi, director of the trust.

She says 70 per cent of abortions could be prevented if women used "emergency contraception". The term "morning after" adds to confusion, as the pill can be taken for up to 72 hours after unprotected sex.

Ms Furedi said: "We believe

that women are sensible and capable of reading labels and following instructions.

"The resistance to making it available for sale is partly because women are seen as being incapable and not competent of making a sensible judgement."

"There also exists an element of schizophrenia in that they want to promote us and reduce the number of abortions, but there is a reluctance because it can be seen to allow for unprepared and unplanned sex. It is a moral issue. "We want emergency con-

traception to be available off prescription so women can buy it like other pharmacy products. You don't wait until you have a headache to buy aspirin."

Results of a project in Washington in which pharmacists are issuing the drug have shown that half the women using the service said that without such easy access the would have simply waited to see if they were pregnant.

Ms Furedi said: "This shows that women don't use the morning-after pill because it is such a hassle to get."

A survey earlier this year carried out on behalf of the Contraceptive Alliance, an agency set up by the Family Planning Association and the Health Education Authority, said that almost half of all pregnancies in Britain are unplanned and one in five results in abortion.

The campaign, championed by the Liberal Democrat MP Jenny Tonge, begins on 11 June, when supporters will meet to discuss the possibility of putting down an Early Day Motion to reclassify the drug.

Tax rise for second home owners

By Mark Sowerby

SECOND HOME owners could be hit with larger council tax bills under proposals being studied by ministers.

The proposed move, which would be popular with campaigners concerned with the protection of the countryside, is being considered by the Department of the Environment.

If the Government decides to back the increase the owners of about 500,000 properties who currently qualify for a 50 per cent council tax reduction could be asked to pay the full rate set by the local authority.

A DoE spokeswoman yesterday admitted the proposal was being considered, but emphasised that it represented just one of many responses to the Government's consultation paper "Improving Local Finance Accountability".

Another response says councils should create "zones" in which absentee owners would pay premium rates on properties.

Campaigners supporting both ideas believe they could slow surging house prices and help to counter rural depopulation.

The Local Government Association has been lobbying for the right to charge second home owners up to three times the standard rate.

Leading article, page 14

Beleaguered CPS faces shake-up

A MAJOR shake-up of the much-criticised Crown Prosecution Service is expected today, with the release of a long-awaited report by the former judge Sir Iain Glidewell.

The Director of Public Prosecutions, Dame Barbara Mills, announced 10 days ago that she was stepping down early but insisted the move was nothing to do with the imminent publication of the report by Sir Iain, a former Court of Appeal judge.

His year-long study is thought to be highly critical of senior management at the CPS and is reported to suggest splitting the functions of the DPP into two.

A new post of chief executive would be created to take over the administration and running of the service, leaving the DPP to concentrate on the core work of prosecution decisions and policy.

Downing Street yesterday refused to be drawn into speculation over who would be appointed to the post. It has been suggested that Mark Addison, the former private secretary to Baroness Thatcher, was likely to take control.

The Attorney General, John Morris, has already signalled that he will restructure the CPS's existing 13 regions into 42, each one matching a police

constabulary area. Each would be headed by a chief Crown prosecutor - modelled on the United States District Attorney system - who would be expected to build up a much closer working relationship with police locally.

Detectives have been strongly critical of what they saw as a CPS reluctance to prosecute cases which stood a good chance of conviction.

One Police Federation official dubbed it the Criminals Protection Society.

Recent initiatives to improve co-operation between the two services have included posting CPS lawyers to police stations

full-time to advise officers on successfully taking cases to court.

Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, said recently the Glidewell report would identify "potentially beneficial changes in the way the CPS work with the police and other agencies". But Sir Iain has also had to tackle the problem of morale among CPS staff.

A recent poll by a trade union of members within the service found lawyers were committed to their work but demoralised by a top-heavy management culture, excessive workloads and a huge administrative burden.



Barbara Mills: Stepping down early

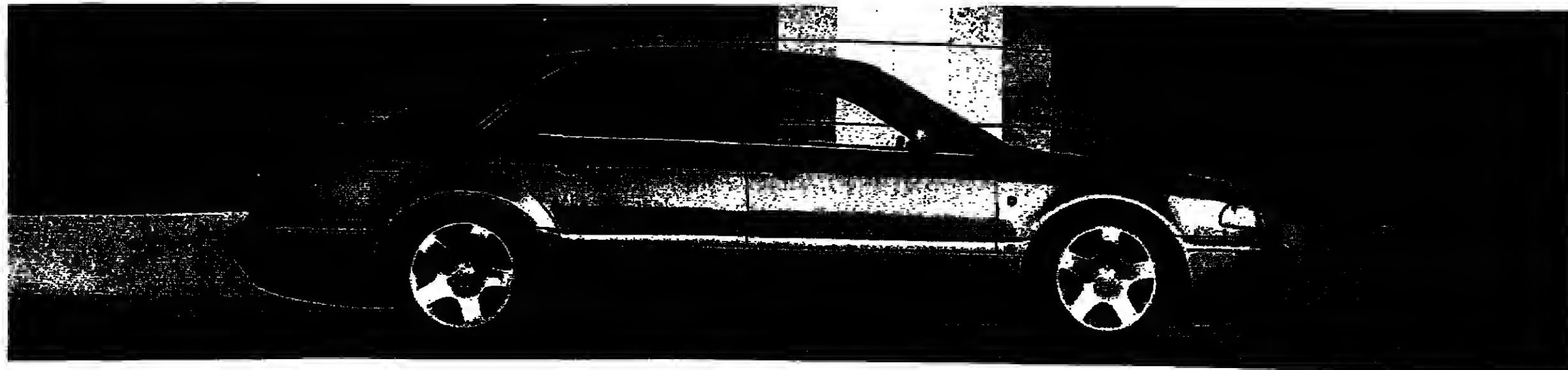
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The vast empty space of the Trans-Antarctic Mountains, one of the world's few remaining remote wildernesses. Photograph: Peter Spielmann/AP

Lure of the wild draws tourists to Antarctica

By Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

IT BOASTS spectacular scenery, sunny weather and exotic wildlife. British Antarctica has had its busiest season yet as a tourist destination for those in search of an alternative holiday. Last year a record 4,800 people visited Port Lockroy in British Antarctica, up from 800 the previous year, as the search for more exotic holidays continues. Port Lockroy, with its large gentoo penguin population, has been recently restored as an Antarctic base and declared a historic site. At the newly opened post office and souvenir shop, T-shirts with pictures of penguins have proved a particularly popular buy.

"It's so remote and people perceive it as the last remote wilderness," said Norman Cobley, a seabird ecologist who

manned the base in 1996-97. "It's something that people perceive as a challenge. We don't need to encourage people to come, more and more are coming anyway."

A spokeswoman for Orient Lines, the biggest cruise line operating to the area, said: "It's a wonderful destination and surprisingly sunny. The temperatures are around 45F so it's rather like going on a skiing holiday."

"Exceptional" demand means that the company has planned five extra cruises for next year, with all cruises this year fully booked. Four different types of penguins, seals and whales are among the attractions for tourists. "Visitors also get to see albatrosses - the sort of bird that they have only read about," she added. "It's the sort of place for people who want something completely different."

A 13-day cruise next year will cost £3,111, or 26 days

£5,083. Conservationists have expressed fears that the growth of tourism to Antarctica could result in destruction of the wilderness. Orient Line says it is careful to avoid this: "We only take small groups of people ashore at any one time and we don't want people trampling over a lovely unspoiled area."

"We've carried out studies and preliminary investigations show that there is no damage to the penguin population," said Mr Cobley. "We can't say whether there is any impact on anything else yet."

He had a warning, however, for those who see the Antarctic as nothing but glamorous: "Living on a small island with 2,000 pairs of penguins is very smelly and very noisy. We live without electricity and running water which can be a shock when people get off their nice warm cruise ships."

Indonesia receives £300,000 in army aid

By Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

BRITAIN has spent almost £300,000 on military aid to Indonesia since Labour came to power, new figures reveal.

The money - spent by the Foreign Office, Ministry of Defence and, to a lesser extent, the Department for International Development - does not include the budget for promoting arms sales to the regime, which remains secret.

Since May 1997, British taxpayers have funded a range of training courses for the Indonesian military despite widespread condemnation of its human rights abuses.

Soldiers and seamen from Indonesia have received aid from UK experts in their own country, as well as attending colleges in Britain.

Services on offer include courses on map-making, surveying and weather patterns, as well as English-language tuition and a sub-lieutenant's course for officers seeking promotion.

A spokesman for the Ministry of Defence said its £42,800 share of the money promoted co-operative working. "If you finish up working together in response to a crisis it can help. Exposure to the professional ethos in our military programme can generate considerable goodwill," he said.

The Foreign Office said half the £225,000 it spent in 1997-98 was a "carry-over" from the previous year, though a spokesman could not say why. Much of it was spent on English-language training agreed under the previous government.

The Foreign Office programme will be replaced this year with a new scheme targeted at promoting human rights, the spokesman said. "We look at these things case by case and

consider them against human rights objectives," he said.

Since 1990, the Ministry of Defence has spent £3.4m on military aid to Indonesia, according to figures released to Ann Clwyd, Labour MP for Cynon Valley.

That does not include spending by the Defence Export Services Organisation in support of arms deals, including the controversial sale of Hawk jets by British Aerospace. An MoD spokesman confirmed that such support had been given but was unable to give figures on its cost.

The Department for International Development has stopped giving aid to the Indonesian police, although a spokeswoman said it had met the residual costs of training for one officer in the past year.

Ms Clwyd questioned whether the Indonesian officers would really learn liberal values from Britain. "I just cannot believe the Indonesian government would have chosen people with independent minds. This is another argument for Parliament to have the opportunity to debate arms sales to countries that are dodgy," she said.

The Foreign Office budget was disclosed in a Parliamentary answer to Jenny Tonge, Liberal Democrat MP for Richmond Park. "We haven't seen any evidence yet of the peaceful skills that these people are supposed to be being taught. All we get is trouble," she said.

The Campaign Against the Arms Trade said in a statement that despite the change of regime the Indonesian military might still thwart the cause of democracy.

"The support that successive UK governments, including the present one, have given to the military is indefensible, as is the spending of taxpayers' money on the marketing of weapons to forces responsible for genocide in East Timor," it said.

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India tested bomb to 'counter China's threat'

By Peter Popham
in Delhi

WHILE Pakistanis continued to dance in the street and fire guns in the air yesterday in celebration of their country's six nuclear tests, the scientists responsible returned to Islamabad from the test site in Baluchistan to a rousing welcome.

Pakistan's top nuclear scientist said Islamabad's newly tested nuclear weapons were more

efficient and reliable than those of India and could be delivered by superior missiles. Abdul Qadeer Khan said Pakistan could deploy its nuclear weapons in days if needed and had begun mass production of its medium-range Gauri missile, which could carry nuclear warheads.

Declining to commit his country to a moratorium on tests, Pakistan's foreign minister, Gohar Ayub Khan, told a private Indian television network: "We

are ready to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) along with India - but India has conditions. What are they?"

In Washington, President Clinton formally ratified sanctions triggered by Pakistan's first tests which will affect billions of dollars in loans.

India's and Pakistan's tests have also helped lift the dollar against most currencies, as investors seek refuge in the US currency both from economic

troubles in Japan and Russia and the military tension between Delhi and Islamabad.

In Delhi, an intriguing explanation for India's nuclear initiative surfaced in the *Sunday Times of India*. India's nuclear tests were neither a bid by the government for domestic popularity, nor a gratuitous outburst of aggressive nationalism, the article claimed. Citing unnamed "high-level sources", MD Nalapat wrote that they were, rather,

a response to intelligence that China had given Pakistan the means to carry out a nuclear test, and that Pakistan planned to do so on 28 May (which as it happens was the actual date of the first Pakistani tests).

According to the article, India's tests were thus designed to pre-empt Pakistan's. Had Pakistan got its bang in first, the idea was for China then to have convened a special session of the UN Security Council at which

Pakistan's test would have been deplored, and international sanctions mandated on any country that followed Pakistan's lead. If India had gone ahead and tested anyway, it could have faced far harsher sanctions than those that have actually been imposed.

In support of this theory, one could point to the testing of Pakistan's long-range missile, Gauri, developed with Chinese assistance and tested in April,

which at the time rang alarm bells in Washington as well as Delhi about Islamabad's intentions. It would also help to explain the universal support extended to the Indian Prime Minister, A B Vajpayee, by his political opponents after the first Indian tests, and the anti-Peking rhetoric which the Indian government has indulged in since taking office in March. It would also make sense of Mr Vajpayee's otherwise bizarre

remark, following Pakistan's first tests, that India's tests had now been "vindicated".

If the theory is correct, India has dodged a Chinese-Pakistan attempt to stymie its atomic weapons programme, or make it prohibitively expensive. If the attempt had succeeded, Mr Nalapat says, it would have given China "a clear road ... to dominate Asia strategically in the next century".

Comment, page 15

Chirac courts Arab support with tough line on Israel

By Robert Fisk
in Beirut

THE MOMENT he said it, a ripple of applause washed through the Lebanese in front of the old French high commissioner's residence. "Israel must withdraw from Lebanon in accordance with [UN] resolution 425 - and without conditions," President Jacques Chirac stated. "As for Syria, she has the right to see the Golan Heights restored to her. In return, Israel - like every state in the region - has the right to complete and total security."

What was odd about the French leader's remarks, in his third visit to Lebanon in two years, was that what might once have seemed bland now seems dramatic. It is a measure of how far American "peace-making" in the Middle East has collapsed that merely to restate the original principles of land-for-peace - the basis of the 1991 Madrid Middle East conference - should now seem so daring. Yet dramatic it was.

For here, as the Americans themselves are throwing up their hands in surrender before the Israeli Prime Minister's symbolic but carefully reported threat to "burn Washington" if he was forced to surrender more occupied land to the Palestinians, was a man getting angry with all the backsliding. Ignoring Israel's and America's attempts to make a piecemeal series of agreements, Mr Chirac stated that "peace could only be founded on a global accord".

There was more clapping across the lawn as the massive tricolour floated and snapped

gently above the ornate former Turkish casino that is now the French embassy.

It was the sharpest retort yet to Benjamin Netanyahu's proposal to accept - with conditions - the UN security council resolution which calls for an unconditional Israeli withdrawal. Israel's decision to accept 425, but with conditions, was naturally hailed by the United States as a serious step. Why shouldn't the Lebanese disarm Israel's Hizbollah guerrilla enemies before they leave, they asked? The Lebanese, who suspect that once the Hizbollah are disarmed, the Israelis might stay, were told by the US ambassador to Beirut to take the proposal seriously.

Mr Chirac, while insisting he and Europe were supporting Washington, effectively dismissed the whole thing. The fact that Israel wanted to withdraw from Lebanon after 20 years was a "new element", he conceded, but there must be no conditions. "Israel must understand that its people cannot have security without peace". As his audience knew all too well, this was a direct attack on Mr Netanyahu, who claims to want security before peace.

The French president understood the nuances well. He referred to Syria's presence in Lebanon, but to Israel's "occupation" of southern Lebanon. He talked about his own proposal - with President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt - to relaunch the "peace process" with a new peace conference which would initially leave out the Israelis and Palestinians. In reality, French diplomats in Paris have been suggesting the



Ultra-orthodox Jews at the Wailing Wall, Jerusalem, taunting a conservative Jew attempting to pray there yesterday. At the site - Judaism's holiest - the ultra-orthodox confronted 300 conservative Jews. They reject both conservative and reform practices. Photograph: Jim Hollander/Reuters

European Union should end Israel's economic trade benefits with Europe because of what the French believe is Mr Netanyahu's desire to destroy the 1993 Oslo agreement with the PLO.

At a dinner after his speech, the Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafiq Hariri, was blunter than Mr Chirac. He thanked France for rebuilding in Lebanon "what Israel has destroyed" and talked of his country's "privileged relations" with

Syria. He did not say his country was also "privileged" to have 21,000 Syrian troops on its territory.

Now Pakistan possessed nuclear weapons, there were also warnings from Mr Hariri that Arab states might carry out similar tests - not least because Israel was a nuclear power. For a few seconds, fantasy took over the audience. Were the Lebanese going to go nuclear? Mercifully, Mr Hariri had other nations in mind.

President's history lesson skips over the less glorious chapter

By Robert Fisk

THE LAST time I stood under the plane trees of the French embassy, the stench was unbearable. One at a time - sometimes in pieces - they were bringing in the corpses of the 58 French paratroopers killed in the suicide bombing of their Beirut headquarters. The doctors wore surgical masks, we held handkerchiefs to our faces. It was stiflingly hot. Yet how easily do the years - and the memorials - sanitise our memory.

For there we were yesterday, 15 years later, standing a few feet from that tree behind Jacques Chirac as the French President honoured his dead countrymen. French UN troops stood to attention as the last post was played before the memorial to 137 French soldiers who died in Lebanon during the civil war and the 17 French embassy staff murdered - or "killed by terrorists" as the plaque says - during the same period.



President Jacques Chirac (centre) laying a wreath at the monument in Beirut, the Lebanese capital, to the French killed during the country's civil war. Photograph: Jack Dabaghian/Reuters

gling with medals, to prove the ties of blood.

But Mr Chirac forgot to remember the greatest French bloodbath in Lebanon, when more than 40,000 French troops loyal to Pétain resisted the Allied invasion of 1941, dying in their thousands in the Chouf mountains. Given the opportunity to fight alongside the Allies or return to Vichy France, 37,000 chose to go back to Pétain. They set sail, cheering their support for Nazi Germany's French ally - and were very definitely excluded from the weekend's history lessons.

But in front of that Beirut memorial, one French cameraman was deeply moved. He described to me how, in the French paratroop headquarters on the morning of 23 October 1983, he heard an explosion and saw "cracks appearing in the walls of my room" before hurrying himself beneath a table where he lay, his legs trapped by concrete, for 36 hours. His name might have been alongside his old comrades on the white stone tablet in front of us. But now he was no longer a "para", just a newsman whose memory would never be sanitised.

There, too, was the name of Michel Seurat, the brilliant French Arabist who was among the foreign hostages in Lebanon and who died alone in captivity, of cancer, in December 1985. President Chirac even mentioned his name on the lawn of the French "Résidence des Pins" the previous evening - no one suggested he probably did so because Seurat's widow, Marie, still blames the French government for failing to recover his body from his kidnappers.

Mr Chirac presented us with a sanitised version of history. He reminded us of the founder of modern Lebanon, General Henri Gouraud, and of Charles de Gaulle's arrival in Beirut after the Free French victory here in 1941. There were Lebanese *anciens combattants* of the French army, chests jan-

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Past problems cloud France's new image

The World Cup host nation is looking to present a can-do face. But reality is more complex, writes John Lichfield Paris

BRITONS watching the World Cup on the BBC will have a privileged view of a traditional France of elegance and splendour - one of the twin images the country wishes to project to the world. The BBC team of World Cup experts will broadcast from what amounts to a makeshift bungalow, perched on top of one of the magnificent buildings overlooking the Place de la Concorde in Paris.

If you tire of the musings of Desnoes, Alan, David *et al*, rest your eyes on the splendid background: on the colonnade of the Assemblée Nationale, the Eiffel Tower, or on France's version of Cleopatra's Needle (newly plastered with gold leaf at its apex, so that it looks, in the evening sunlight, like a giant illuminated candle).

Normally it would be unthinkable, impossible, to obtain permission to place a bottle of wine on the roof of the Automobile Club de France; let alone a prefabricated bungalow. The permission was secured with ease, revealing the other aspect of France that the country hopes to broadcast to the world in the next six weeks: a can-do France: a modern France: a business-like France.

Stubbornly, the world insists

on tuning into a different picture. Recall the stories which have dominated headlines in the run-up to the World Cup, and not just in Britain.

There is the Air France pilots' strike, starting today, which is already seriously disrupting travel to the World Cup. There is the much less serious threat of a rail strike, or several rail strikes. There was talk of a lorry drivers' blockade (now cancelled). There is the confusion and fury over World Cup ticket sales (not in fact entirely France's fault). There is the investigation of alleged corruption in President Chirac's RPR party, which threatens to cause legal complications for the President himself.

This is a year that gives France a chance to re-adjust its public image for the 21st century, but much of the country, or at least its media, has appeared preoccupied with the past, from the Dreyfus affair to Vichy to May 1968.

Despite the best efforts and hopes of the organisers and the government, the pre-tournament publicity has projected an immobile France: a France ill at ease with itself; a France poorly served by its politicians; a France facing the world, and its future, backwards.



The old cliché - but in fact France now has one of Europe's more dynamic economies
Photograph: Brian Harris

An immobile country? In a sense, the two days' harvest of strikes suggests the opposite: that this is a country which is changing rapidly, or at least trying to change.

In almost every case, the cause of the strike was not a pay demand but an attempt by the management to move to short-term contracts, or more flexible working patterns.

The Air France pilots' strike arises directly from a plan to sell off part of the state-owned airline; the strike at the Toulon shipyard was caused by the fact that the (Socialist-led) government had sent a large naval oil tanker for repairs at a private yard.

The emigration of small businesses and young people also has its positive side: even a few years ago such a willingness to go abroad would have been unthinkable. It suggests the country is opening to the world in a way that will be, in the longer run, to the benefit of France.

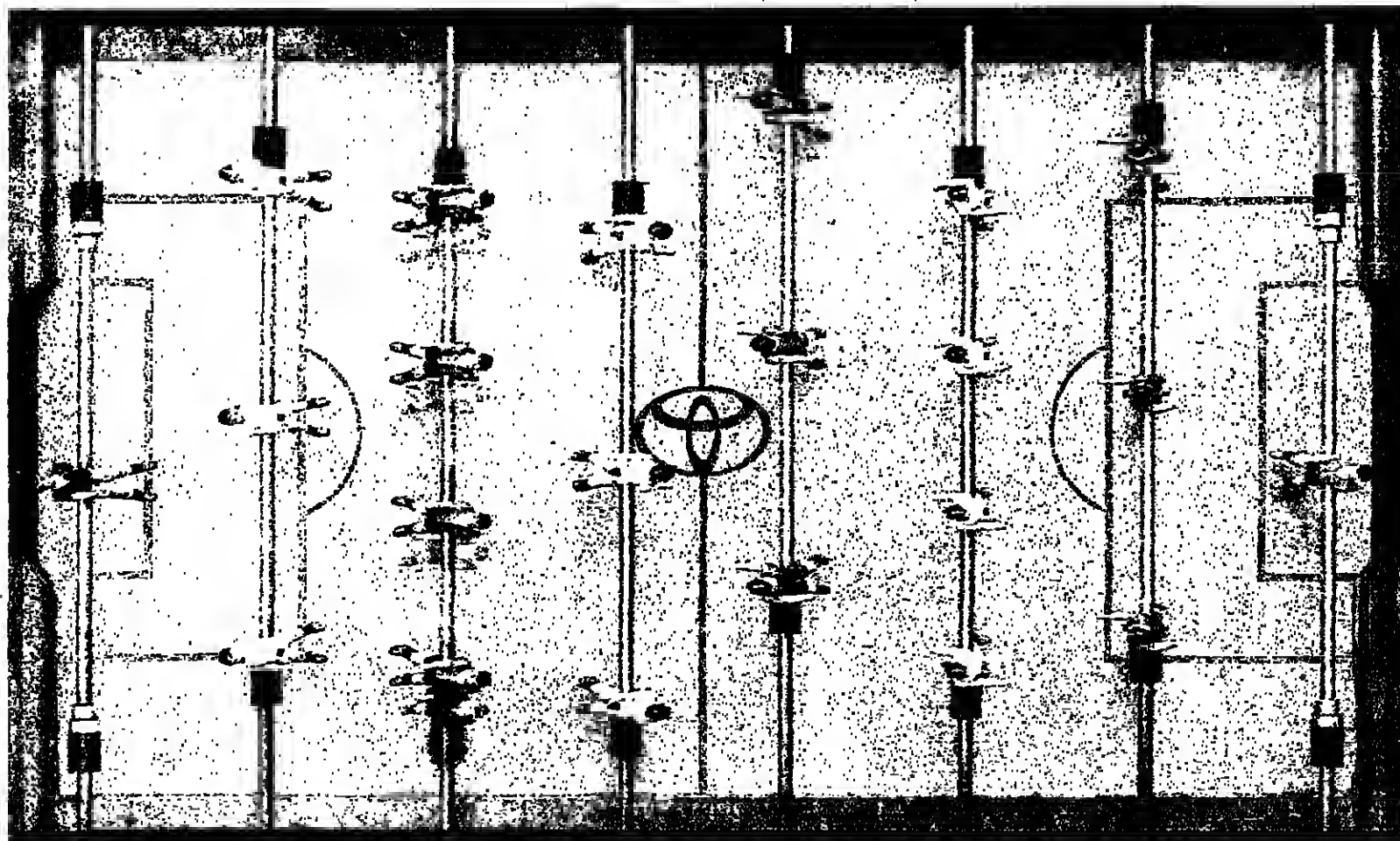
A country stuck in the past? It is true that bookshops have been flooded with reminiscences, recreations and re-examinations of the events of May 1968. It is also true that all of these publications have been a commercial disaster. The public, it seems, does not want to know.

A great country poorly served by its politicians? On the right of the political spectrum, it is difficult to argue with that judgement. The destructive manoeuvring by parties of the centre-right in recent weeks has been driven mostly by personal vanity. The creeping progress of no less than 12 judicial investigations into the finances of the neo-Gaullist RPR is, at the least, a severe embarrassment to the party's founder, Jacques Chirac. It may prove something more than that.

On the left side of the spectrum, the more thoughtful commentators of both right and left admit the unspectacular Lionel Jospin has been an unspectacular success. There is something about the Prime Minister's passionate ordinariness which appeals to a public disillusioned by the hollow grandeur of Mitterrand and Chirac and the arrogance and stuffiness of Alain Juppé and Edouard Balladur.

It is not entirely misleading that France's World Cup month should begin with a disruptive labour dispute. But the underlying truth is that France is in better shape, and in better heads, than seemed possible a year ago.

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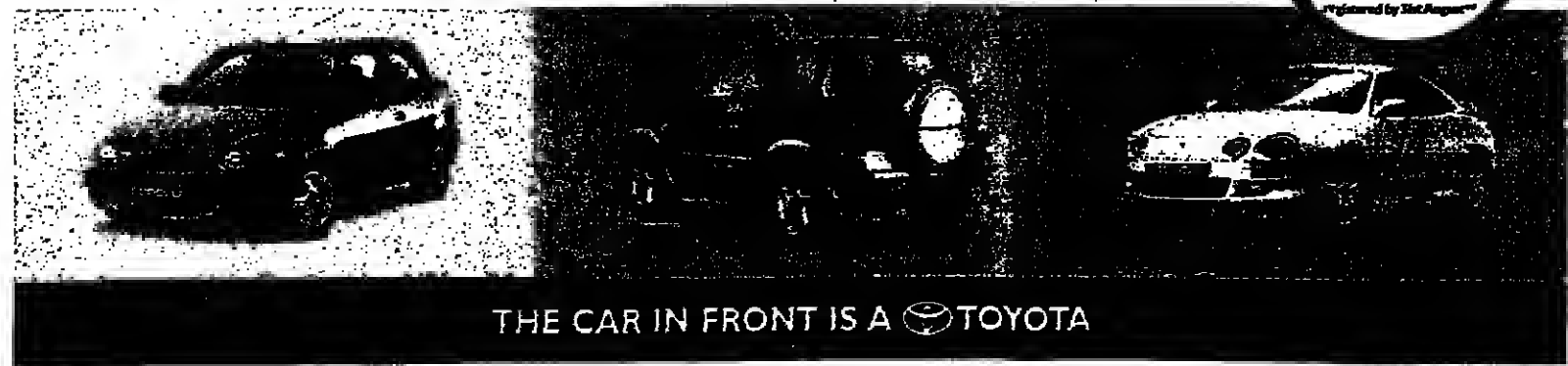
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year, substantially faster than Britain's.

Exports, as ever, are surging. Inflation scarcely exists. Interest rates are low. Industrial investment, both domestic and foreign, is the highest for years. Household spending is climbing steeply.

Whether Lionel Jospin, the Socialist Prime Minister elected 12 months ago today, deserves any credit for this happier state of affairs is a matter of debate. In part, the country is benefiting from the previous centre-right government's Emu-inspired check on public spending; in part, the profits from high exports, fuelled by a high dollar and a low franc, have finally cheered up domestic businesses and consumers alike.

At the least, Mr Jospin inherited an unexpected economic upturn and managed affairs sufficiently pragmatically not to ruin his own good fortune. The sullen mood of France during last year's election campaign has been replaced by something more positive: a sense that three years' economic bad weather is passing.

But there is also a sense that many underlying problems are unchanged: youth unemployment remains high; public spending still takes almost 50 per cent of everything France creates; the inner suburbs of most large towns are racially tense and economically deprived. The economy remains oddly divided between a few mega-companies, mostly state-controlled or recently priva-

tised, and thousands of small businesses; France does not easily create, or sustain, the medium-size businesses, especially in the hi-tech area, which are creating jobs in other countries. The slow emigration of small businesses, and young people, to Britain shows no signs of abating.

Then there are the strikes. Living in France in the 1990s can be like living through a grainy old video of the UK in the 1970s (without the huge side-burns and garish kipper ties). As an ex-

Living in France can be like living through a grainy old video of the UK in the 1970s

ercise last week, I did a search for the word grève (strike) on two days of the domestic news wire of the French news agency Agence France-Presse. There were 85 strike stories in 48 hours, some of them, admittedly, updates and repeats.

Apart from those already reported, there were strikes by postal engineers, aircraft cleaners, Metro-station cleaners, postal delivery workers in parts of Paris, workers at the naval shipyard in Toulon, attendants at the Grand Palais exhibition hall in Paris, and employees of the Paris botanical gardens and the Museum of Mankind.

Pilots' strike disrupts airline

A PILOTS' strike will ground up to 90 per cent of Air France flights today, nine days before the World Cup starts in France, writes John Lichfield.

Several plane-loads of Brazilian fans, planning to depart for Europe, have been forced to switch to later flights or other airlines.

It remains unclear whether the strike will continue up to, and beyond, the opening game of the World Cup on 10 June. The largest pilots' union has called a two-week strike until 15 June. Five other, smaller

unions are due to abandon their action next weekend.

Formal negotiations, on the state-owned airline's demand for a 15 per cent cut in pilots' pay over three years, broke down on Thursday.

Air France said 90 per cent of its long-haul flights would be abandoned today. It hoped to preserve one in four of its medium-distance and internal flights from Charles de Gaulle airport, but probably less than one in five from Orly.

If the strike is pursued beyond this week, fans travelling

to, and within, France for the World Cup should be able to find alternative means of transport.

Long-distance passengers can fly into London or Frankfurt and complete their journey by rail.

Air France said its pilots (who earn up to £100,000 a year) are 20 per cent better paid than those in Britain and Germany. It said pay cuts, in return for shares, will have to be made if the airline is to be privatised on schedule in the autumn.

Paris mosque's moderate leader was terrorist target

A MODERATE French Islamic leader was among the targets of a suspected Algerian terrorist network broke up in five European countries last week, according to French police, writes John Lichfield.

Documents seized in raids in France included copies of a previously unknown, but four-year-old fatwa against Dalil Boubakeur, rector of the Paris mosque. The French newspaper *Le Journal de Dimanche* said a number of suspects arrested in France had admitted that they planned to assassinate Mr Boubakeur, who is accused of being an apologist for the Algerian government.

Of the 55 people arrested in France, 16 have been detained for questioning.



Dalil Boubakeur (left), rector of the Paris mosque, has been the subject of a secret fatwa
Photograph: Michel Euler/AP

Colombia searches for peace in the ruins

By Phil Davison
Latin America Correspondent

PEACE, not party politics, was the number one issue in yesterday's presidential elections in Colombia, a nation which is on the brink of anarchy and largely in the grip of an assortment of Marxist guerrillas, right-wing paramilitary groups and powerful druglords.

Andrés Pastrana, a former mayor of the capital, Bogotá, looked likely to finish ahead in the race to replace Ernesto Samper, who cannot run for a second term. But Mr Pastrana, a conservative 44-year-old son of the Seventies president Misael Pastrana, is almost certain to face a run-off this month against the second-placed candidate, as he is unlikely to poll 50 per cent of the first-round vote. That will probably be the

former interior minister Horacio Serpa, 55, of Mr Samper's long-ruling Liberal Party.

However, Noemi Sanín, the former foreign minister who is bidding to become Colombia's first female president, was closing the gap on Mr Serpa in opinion polls.

Ms Sanín, 49, was helped by an endorsement from one of the country's two most-beloved sons, the former Newcastle United footballer Faustino Asprilla. The other, the author Gabriel García Márquez, backed Mr Pastrana, saying he was the man to pull Colombia out of what he called its current "inferno".

Although all four leading candidates are running on a platform of change, Colombians detect few differences in their ideologies. Ending the almost daily guerrilla attacks, kidnappings or massacres by

paramilitary groups, and getting the economy back on the rails, is the priority of most of the country's 21 million voters.

During his four-year term, Mr Samper, who was initially accused of receiving cocaine money from the Cali cartel during his campaign, saw the two main Marxist guerrilla groups increase their control to nearly half the country. It is now virtually impossible to drive any distance outside Bogotá, Cali or Medellín without running into a guerrilla roadblock and the danger of being kidnapped.

With the army outmanned and outgunned by the guerrillas, paramilitary groups set up by wealthy landowners have increasingly carried out a "dirty war" against civilians they suspect of backing the guerrillas. Last year, more than 1,420 people

were killed in what were officially described as "massacres", mostly by paramilitary groups.

"The next president is going to find a country in complete ruins," said the former justice minister Enrique Parejo. "It has to be rebuilt again from scratch."

Neighbouring Ecuador also held presidential elections yesterday to replace the interim president, Fabian Alarcon, with the ghost of the exiled former president Abdala Bucaram, known as "el loco" ("the madman"), haunting the polls. Mr Alarcon was named President last year to fill in for Mr Bucaram after he was ruled "mentally incompetent" by the country's Congress.

Mr Bucaram fled to Panama but is a close friend of one of yesterday's leading candidates, Alvaro Noboa, who is expected to let "el loco" back to Ecuador if he wins the presidency.

Montenegro election threatens Milosevic

YUGOSLAVIA'S strongman Slobodan Milosevic will confront a dire threat to his 11-year rule if voters in the small republic of Montenegro, one of two republics left in Yugoslavia, elect his bitter enemy as their president, writes Marcus Tanner.

Voters yesterday were offered a straight choice between Milo Djukanovic, 36, a pro-Western reformer who has called for Mr Milosevic's removal, and Momir Bulatovic, 42, a Milosevic protégé. Mr Djukanovic has flirted openly with the possibilities of Montenegro's secession, a move certain to encounter violent resistance in Belgrade, and which would leave Serbia on its own in Yugoslavia.

Polls suggest Mr Djukanovic may triumph – narrowly – in the republic of 650,000 people, but Montenegro remains sharply divided – as it has been since

union with Serbia after the First World War – between supporters of Serbia and of Montenegrin independence.

With a small population, Montenegro can only aggravate Serbia's misery; it cannot challenge. 9 million Serbs militarily. But Mr Djukanovic's election would be a disaster for Mr Milosevic, now encumbered suppressing the separatist war in Serbia's southern, Albanian-majority province of Kosovo.

When fighting erupted between the nationalities in the old Yugoslavia in 1992, Montenegrins hurried to the side of their fellow Orthodox Serbs against Catholic Croats. But in recent years, disillusion with Serbia's confrontational policies – and the poverty it has brought in its wake – has set in, feeding a separatist movement that fondly recalls the days before 1918 when Montenegro was independent.

Sodomy trial opens

HARARE (Reuters) — Zimbabwe's former president Robert Mugabe goes on trial today on 11 charges of sodomy, attempted sodomy and indecent assault.

The cases against the 62-year-old Methodist clergyman, who served as a largely ceremonial president in the 1980s, were compiled by the state attorney

complaints by one of his former presidential guards.

He was first charged last July but appealed, arguing that pre-trial publicity had prejudiced his right to a fair hearing. The appeal was dismissed in March.

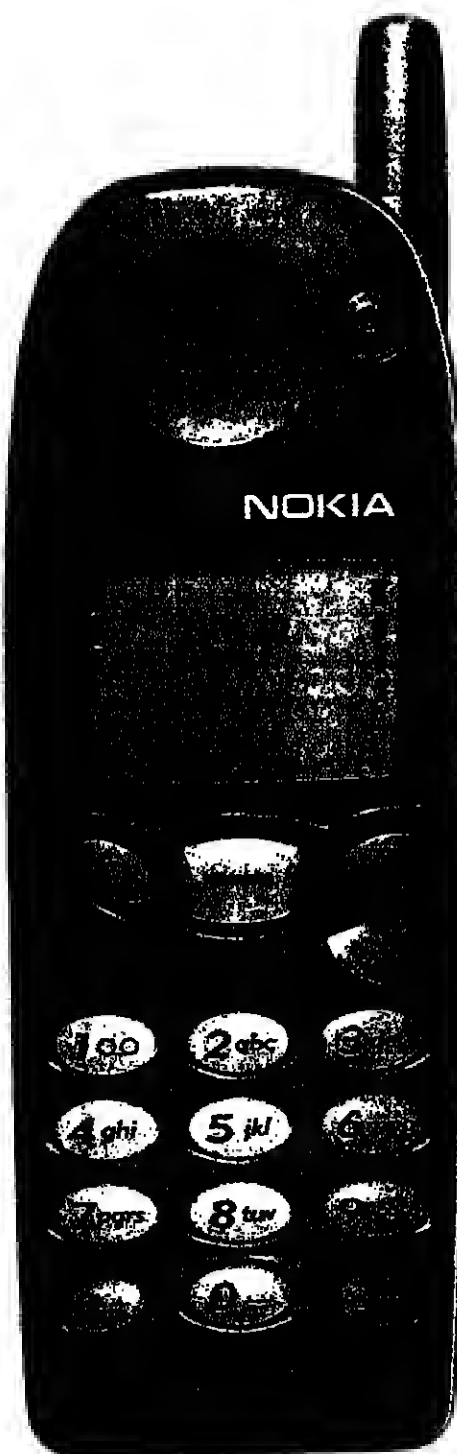
Mr Mugabe had been under police investigation after allegations that he had raped Jephtha Dube, one of his former aides.

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It's not getting there

After years of attempting to make the floating 'maglev' train a reality, the dream has proved too expensive. So why are Japan and Germany still trying? By Charles Arthur

THE train looks more like a jet without wings. It whizzes over its test track in the Japanese countryside in virtual silence. It is a tribute to technology; but after 36 years of effort, and billions of pounds spent on development, this sleek, futuristic showcase of Japanese expertise has yet to carry a single paying passenger.

The "maglev" train gets its name because it levitates a few centimetres above its monorail track, held up and propelled forward by electromagnetic effects. There have been commercial "maglev" systems. Actually, only one. Until two years ago, it was Birmingham Airport's claim to world fame: a "maglev" train carried passengers between the air and rail terminals, a 90-second journey that was impressive only in its daftness.

Nowadays, the job is done by shuttle buses. They may be unglamorous and noisier, but they are cheaper. So, will Japan prove us all wrong by turning the "maglev" into our future, the one imagined by so many visionaries of 50 years ago?

"I doubt it will ever happen. There's no rationale for it," says Laurant Delgrande, a transportation analyst. But why not? "Maglev" systems are simple in principle. They work by magnetic repulsion, between magnets mounted on the moving carriage and electromagnetic systems in the rail.

First, you have to energise the rail, so that it will produce an electromagnetic field that lifts the weight of the carriage. Then, you have to move that field forwards along the track so that the carriage is both pushed from behind and pulled from in front by a "wave" of magnetic propulsion.

The advantages are that there is no friction and no moving parts. The problems:

the amounts of energy required are huge, and there are safety questions, too, such as, how do you stop such a train safely? With no friction, the idea of braking becomes tricky.

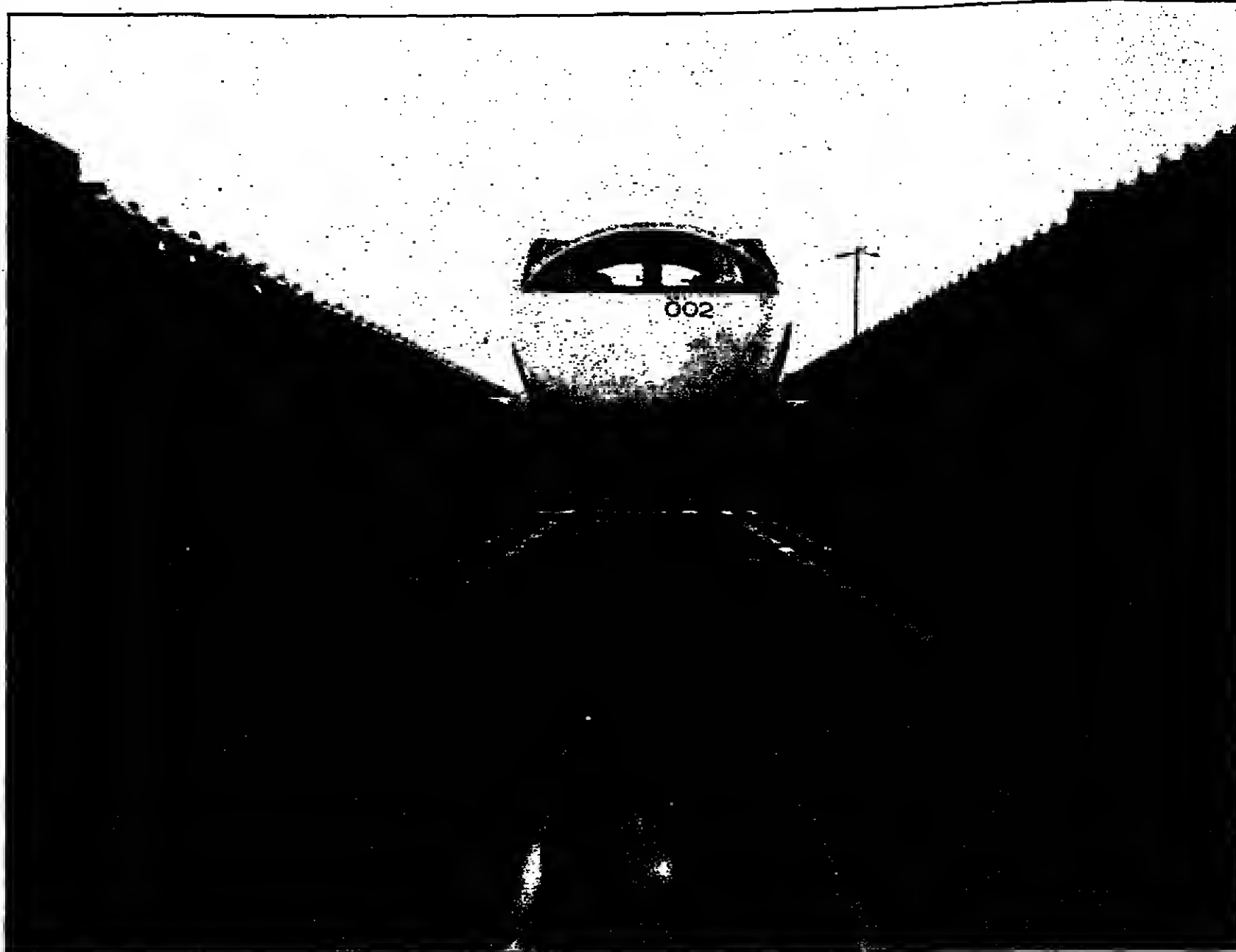
Whatever happened to "maglev", one is tempted to ask – except the real question is, whatever didn't happen? To which the answer is, cheap superconductors.

For a "maglev" train to float it has to carry big superconducting magnets, which – using present technology – means keeping them cooled at around absolute zero, -273°C. At that temperature (around that of liquid helium), the current keeps circulating without loss in the electromagnets on board the train, maintaining the repulsion with the track.

Above it, the superconducting effect disappears and the train stops abruptly. Most other countries have already given up on "maglev"; the United States stopped development 20 years ago, and France is sticking with its conventional high-speed train, the TGV, which achieved a speed of 515.3 kph (319 mph) in 1990.

Germany is the only other nation besides Japan still developing a "maglev" train – for a 290km (180m) connection between Hamburg and Berlin, the country's two biggest cities. The government formally set up a management company for the project earlier this month, and construction is officially planned to start next year. But environmentalists and others criticise its huge cost – DM9.8bn (£3.5bn).

What does Japan like about "maglev"? For a culture always in love with technology, but also with safety, the idea of mass transit by "maglev" offers a way to get rid of wheels without taking the risks of the skies.



A 'maglev' train sets off on a trial run, but barring miracles, or better science, it is likely to remain just a vision for the future

Photograph: Sygma

The intention is to build a route between Tokyo and Osaka, Japan's two largest cities, a route that 360,000 people take every day. The trouble, really, is the cost.

Recently, a test track 18.4km long was built outside Tokyo. The cost: ¥150bn (£680m), or (if you prefer imperial measures) £23m per mile. At that rate, covering the full 770km (481m) to Osaka would cost £29bn. It makes the Channel Tunnel seem like a licence to print money.

Of course, the engineers argue that initial costs are high because they need costly computers and sensors to gather the test data; costs will fall in mass production. The problem is, "mass production" is unlikely to be a reality with "maglev" until the price of superconducting materials falls substantially, or the temperatures they work at rises dramatically.

That seemed like a possibility early this decade, when superconducting temperatures leapt upwards. But they have

stuck around -196 °C, the temperature of liquid nitrogen; and although that liquid is nowadays as cheap as milk, the refrigeration units required still burden your "maglev" train.

Add to that the huge cost of the

and engineering problem that can only be solved by money.

The trouble is, it has already been solved, more cheaply, by old technologies. "Rail technology has advanced to the stage at which it can do most of what 'maglev' was

Japan's *shinkansen*, or bullet trains, run on old-fashioned wheels and rails, are reliable and very fast: the newest models operate at speeds up to 300kph (186mph). The fastest bullet train makes the Osaka to Tokyo trip in 2 hours 30 minutes – a "maglev" train could cut an hour off the trip. But analysts doubt the time savings would justify the cost of an entirely new system.

"Every part of the project is new and expensive," concedes Satoru Sone, an engineering professor at the University of Tokyo who is advising the railroad on the "maglev" project. He says estimates of the costs of linking Tokyo and Osaka with a "maglev" line range from ¥3 trillion to ¥10 trillion (£13bn to £45bn). But even the best approximations are a stab in the dark. "Frankly, I don't think anybody knows how much it will all cost," he says.

Barring miracles – or better science – it looks like those visions of years ago will remain just that: visions.

Until two years ago, Birmingham Airport's 'maglev' carried passengers between air and rail terminals, a 90-second journey impressive only in its daftness

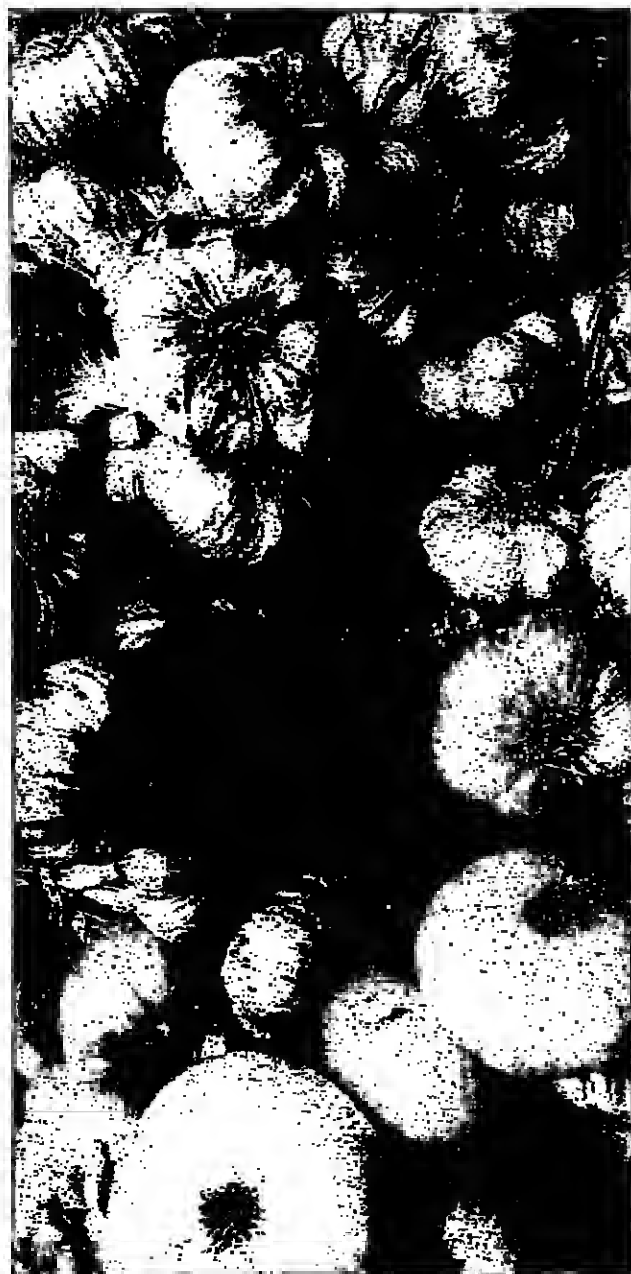
electromagnets required in the track itself – plus the requirement that, to travel safely at speeds of 500kph (310mph), the "maglev" guideway must be flawlessly straight and flat – and you have a science

intended to do," says Tony Eastham, an engineering professor at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. "It is not quite as fast, but it is more affordable, and it is a proven technology," he says.

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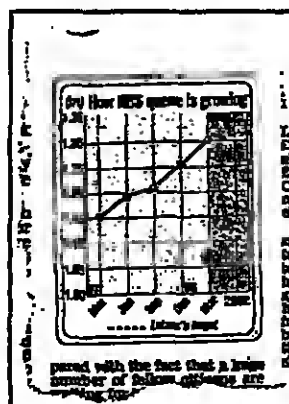
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TELL ME ABOUT... distorting facts with graphs

SHOULD you believe everything you see? The graph (right) appeared recently in a newspaper purporting to be examining the problem of rising waiting lists – especially in the light of Labour's election promise to reduce them by 100,000 between May 1997 and the next election.

On first sight it really looks like Labour, and particularly Frank Dobson, the Health Secretary, have an insuperable task. Look: there is the gradual rise in numbers on the lists; and there on the right is the target, at the bottom of an amazingly steep ramp. Impossible? It certainly looks like it. But look closer. For this is a supreme example of a graph that misinforms. Without knowing if it was intended to tell a lie, a scientist would prefer to say that it distorts the



truth. That, it certainly does.

First, look at the lower axis. The solid points – the real data points – are at three-monthly intervals, when the Department of Health released its figures. But after the latest ones, which cover just one year, we suddenly fast-forward, so that the same

space that previously covered three months now covers four years – a compression factor of 12 times. No wonder that ramp looks steep.

Now check the left-hand axis. Does it start at 0, so that you can see the true relative difference between present, past and future values? No. To emphasise the changes (both real and promised), a false axis, starting at 1 million, has been used. Again, that makes the upward ramp look steeper than it is in true proportion, and makes the downward one (already radically distorted) look even wilder.

The effect: Labour's election promise to reduce waiting lists by 100,000 (slightly less than 9 per cent) over five years has become a 5 in 1 slope – that is, overstated by a factor of more than 50.

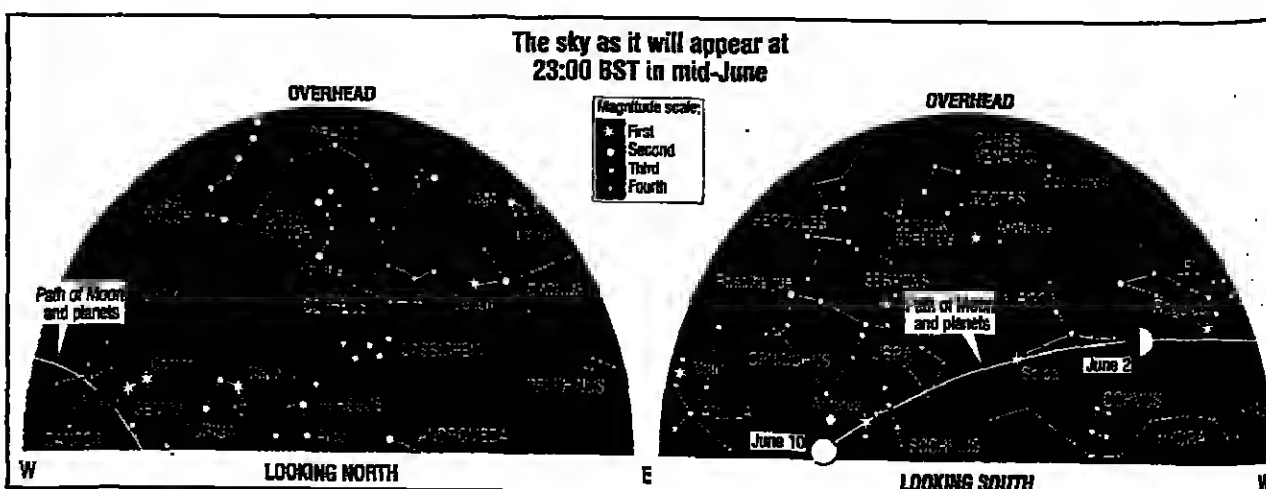
Such tactics are common in propaganda wars. Because we are so used to processing visual information without effort (hence "windows" and "icons" are the currency of computer interfaces), it is always sensible to be suspicious when you are offered a graph as evidence of something.

Do both axes start at sensible points? If different graphs are being shown together, are they really comparable? It is said there are lies, damned lies, and statistics. Don't forget, graphs are statistics, too.

This doesn't, of course, help Mr Dobson, who has a mighty task on his hands. But at least his task isn't as impossible as it's been made to look. Just very, very difficult.

Charles Arthur, Science and Technology Editor

THE STARS IN JUNE



HERCULES can hardly be described as a striking constellation but it is still fascinating. Many of its stars, like its brightest, Rasalgethi (the lowest in the constellation), are double. Rasalgethi is also one of the biggest stars known, with a diameter 600 times greater than the Sun – if placed in our solar system, it would stretch to Jupiter. This huge red giant, with its blue companion, is a beautiful sight in a small telescope.

But to find the main attraction of Hercules, you don't need a telescope. Take the top "rectangle" of the constellation's

shape, and look a third of the way down the right-hand side. If you have clear, transparent skies, you'll see a fuzzy patch. The "blur" is the combined light of about half a million stars, arranged into a tight ball 100 light years across: a globular cluster.

Summer constellations such as Scorpius are putting in an appearance now, and the "Summer Triangle" – Vega, Deneb and Altair – is rising higher in the sky. Red giant Arcturus (meaning "the bear-driver"), the fourth-brightest star in the sky, is highest on June evenings.

Diary for June (all times 24-hour, BST)
2nd 0245 Moon at first quarter
10th 0518 Full Moon
17th 1138 Moon at last quarter
21st 1503 Summer Solstice
24th 0450 New Moon

Heather Couper and Nigel Henbest

This column was held over from last week. The Stars column will next appear, as usual, on the last Monday of the month, 29 June.

هكذا من الأصل

The karma chameleon



SERENA
MACKESY
TALKS TO
OLIVER PEYTON

OLIVER PEYTON is a nice guy, but sitting still is not his forte. He talks not just with his mouth, but his entire body: hands waving and stabbing to emphasise; head swivelling; one of those smiles that explodes from nowhere – bang! curly corners to his lips, pleasantly imperfect teeth – and pops back in at equal speed. When he smiles, which he does often, he turns his face to one side and gazes off into the distance, as though sharing an ironic aside with his imaginary friend. He's infectious, enthusiastic, good for a laugh: restful he ain't.

Our hottest restaurateur – proprietor of the Atlantic Bar and Grill and Coast in London, Mash and Air in Manchester, and its sister restaurant Mash, an onion bread roll's throw from Oxford Circus – has a peripatetic mind to match his lifestyle. He's been down in Brighton this morning, checking on his mother, who is poorly after a dodgy hip replacement. Then it's this interview, an afternoon meeting, then a plane flight down to Cornwall where his girlfriend Charlie's mother, Olga Polizzi, the Forte heiress, is opening a hotel and requires his input.

Peyton talks in bursts, everything peppered with "likes", "you knows" and "sort of's" as he allows his mind to catch up with what he's saying. A typical Peyton statement will run like this: "People say I'm hyperactive, and I suppose maybe, well, yes and no, I mean I seem to end up working a minimum 12-hour day, and I rush around a lot, but I can also, you know, switch off and read a book. My ideal would be to do six months here and six in Italy. I'm really into biographies at the moment. I could happily go to Italy and sit around, go to lunch, take a siesta, have a drink..." The man can even make a hectic schedule from doing nothing.

We're sharing a speedy lunch at Mash, a former car showroom full of pools of light and shade. Seventies-style nubuck leather benches and pouffes, Day-Glo orange and chrome kegs of home-brew for account directors to drink at home: a quick hour, mobile phone on table, half a pizza and half a dozen cigarettes – he's a two-packs-a-day man – crammed in around a stream of words. "There are a lot of people in the restaurant business who've no heart and soul for it. I can tell within 20 seconds of going into a restaurant whether it's good or not. I don't even need to see the menu. They just give out their karma."

Peyton's places certainly give out karma. The opening of the Atlantic five years ago, a fabulously plush concatenation of scarlet and blue, brass and velvet, sofas and cocktails, was something of a milestone in the capital's faded nightlife. The West End at last had a venue with swank but little side, which attracted a remarkable mix of London's high-rollers, who were tiring, on the youth spectrum, of the repetitive thud of nightclubs, and at the older end of the old-school pomposity of the Garrick. When Our Tony entered the annals of modern cliché with his Cool



Photograph: Glynn Griffiths

Britannia soundbite, we could all tell that his Islington outlook was swinging as much towards the Atlantic and its ilk as the marvellous artistic talents who fill the country.

Peyton, 36, had been influencing the culture from the grass roots for years before his overnight celebrity as proprietor of London's most happening nightclub, From Swinford, Co Mayo, he came to Britain in 1979 to study textiles at Leicester on a Confederation of Irish Industry scholarship. "If you're Irish you can't go to university outside the country without paying, so it came in handy. It was a lot of money: I was getting £120 a week in 1979; that's real money. My parents had a textile business for about 30 years – they had lots of different businesses – so there was a logic to it: they thought I was going to go into it. But you've got to be really into the subject, you know. It's very science-based, and I just got bored."

After two years, he moved to Brighton, where he turned nightclub proprietor, running The Can, before starting up Raw, a venue in the basement of Tottenham Court Road YMCA in London. The success of the "novelty" drinks – Japanese lagers – sold at Raw led him into drinks distribution, first of all winning the contract to distribute Sapporo, and then driving the Swedish vodka Absolut into the forefront of the youth market through a canny combination of fashionable tie-ins and advertising –

he was one of the first distributors to really make use of the style-leading qualities of the pink press.

But once a venue geezer, always a venue geezer. And when a clubman ages, something has to change. "I've tried to grow up with my generation. In a way, I'm trying to appeal to the same sort of people who used to come to my clubs. There came a point in the Eighties when you couldn't go to a sweaty club without taking E anymore, and if you wanted a drink it was virtually impossible after 11 pm. It was stupid."

So he set out to change the scene. Research chucked up an interesting fact: that the basement of the Regent Palace Hotel, once a ballroom, then a deeply lucky nightclub, had never had its 3am licence rescinded in the puritanism of wartime Britain. "It was one of the reasons I chose the site, that I knew that the late licence was there. And then we found that, when you removed the false ceilings, that most of the ballroom was pretty much intact; it was pretty much a restoration job. But there was an awful lot of resentment in the business about us operating a 3am licence. The police don't really want us serving booze at 3am. It's only one of two places in the West End where you can get a drink at that time without being a member."

Oddly enough, the punters lapped it up and Peyton has become the messiah of nightlife as therapy. "I have a deep belief that restaurants

are really important to the underlying psyche of a country. I mean, we started clubs because we wanted to have a good time, but back then, if you wanted to go to a restaurant you had to go to some stuffy old French place where you had to spend £200 on a bottle of wine."

"But I think if people see each other out having a good time it has a positive effect on the country as a whole." And, though not all bottles of wine cost £200 at the Atlantic, Coast and Mash, he has managed to

out again. "I'll get my arse kicked for that. But, at the moment in our restaurants, you can eat for under a tenner or you can choose to spend a hundred quid if you like, and I like that idea."

Mr. I'm not entirely convinced that the average clientele of the Peyton restaurants mind so much about food as being in the right place. After all, most of what goes on in Cool Britannia could be summed up in one word: branding. And the trouble with branded goods, as Nike is discovering to its cost at the moment,

'In our restaurants, you can eat for a tenner or you can choose to spend a hundred quid if you like, and I like that idea'

find a large number of people willing to lay out £6 for a gin and tonic.

He takes another bite of pizza, gives up on eating and talking at the same time, pushes it to one side. This is obviously how someone who claims to be "an obsessive foodie, I really am", stays skinny. "We have a master plan about how we're going to develop the restaurants," he says. "Next year we're going to go for a more haute cuisine type of thing. At the moment, I'd see us as more proletarian, because that's what I'm interested in." Bang, the smile comes

is that they tire; people move on. While Mash is the current fave rave of every air-kissing media darling in the city, the Atlantic has been collecting the sneers of those who see themselves on the cutting-edge for its increasingly Essex clientele.

Delightfully, he doesn't respond to this charge with the usual celebrity whinge about the public and pedestals. "Actually," he says, "we have 1,800 people through the door every day, and we're as busy there as we ever were. I know people like to go 'famous for 15 minutes blah blah

blah', but I don't care. All I care about is that people use the thing I've created. I, personally, don't want to go to a place where I see the same faces every day. And over one-third of our business is tourists. Always has been."

I envisage a nightmarish future: a new venue every year, desperately trying to keep ahead of the style leaders' increasingly short attention span. Oddly enough, this seems to be the very thing on which he thrives. Guess that's why he's one of them and I stay at home with my computer. "I wouldn't get out of bed in the morning unless I could do something interesting," he says. "I don't want to be doing Microsoft Restaurant Design, where you get a package and do it by numbers. I want to do something more interesting than that. I've a very, very low boredom threshold. Once a thing's conceived, I'm history."

"There's a whole new generation of people coming up who are very creative and are now starting to get the money together to go into business. I'm quite proud to be part of this. A lot of the received wisdoms and psychoses are beginning to go. Cool Britannia is a bit unfortunate, but there is this groundswell of people moving on to new things."

"New things" coming up in his world in the next few months include a members' club overlooking the Bank of England. "The perception of clubs is stuffy, old-fashioned. The idea is that it's not just going to be

bankers who go. The committee will have lawyers, City and media-type people, so it won't just be the whole of the Goldman Sachs trading floor."

Also under construction is his new "haute cuisine Italian" joint in Knightsbridge, Isola, which will occupy an 88ft frontage that makes the restaurant next door, the venerable Mr Chow, look like a matchbox, plus the projected refurbishment of the ruinous West Pier in Brighton with the help of £14m in lottery money. He's been talking to Oscar Niemeyer, architect of Brasília, and produces a picture of a building planned for the seaford. It looks like the spaceship on top of the very long ladder in turn Vonnegut's *The Sirens of Titan*.

And in cases of lull, there's always table-hopping. Part of Peyton's success is his famous sociability: going up and introducing himself to clientele regardless of celebrity or nonentity. "I do it as much because I enjoy it as because it's good for business. I'm the sort of person who just likes meeting as many different kinds of people as I can. And you get such a mixture of people in our restaurants, from the very, very famous and rich right down to – not that I'm saying they're the bottom of the heap – students. People's grandmothers. It's everybody." As long, I say, as they've got some money. Bang, the imaginary friend gets the joke, too. "Well, yeah."

Deborah Ross is on holiday.

How my home sweet home became a house of pain

I LIE awake tense and restless in the dark, waiting for the new brick. I know it's coming and I almost want it to come, just to get it over with. At 1am-ish I feel drowsy. Maybe not tonight? But no, it is tonight. There is the familiar heavy "wunk" noise followed by a tinkle. The phantom brick-thrasher of London Fields has struck again.

1.15am. I'm in the street, half-dressed and half the street is there, too. It's Alice tonight – her second brick in a week! An entire brick, as usual. Her two children look sleepy and confused.

The police from Shoreditch pootle up in their car. No, they don't need to see the brick and no, they don't need to go into Alice's house. Duly, looking like kids at the end of a too-long day in class, they note down that this is the sixth window

When Marcus Tanner moved in to an 'up-and-coming' inner-city area, his domestic bliss was short-lived

smashed in almost as many days, not to mention umpteen car wind-screens. We recite our little fears, scanning their faces for a sign that "something will be done".

But their expressions read: "You are luvvies who have moved into the heart of the inner city. What do you expect? It's tough." While we are still hiccuping, they back away. They've "got to go" because "there's something going on in E5..."

"Any chance of a camera? Extra patrols?" I shout at their departing footfalls. But they were off to E5, the happening postcode, where people deserve help. We stand in the street. "Erm... goodnight," we say to Alice, shuffling back towards our front doors. There are murmurs of "aw-

ful", "ghastly", "must do something", and we hurry away into the night.

It was the summer of 1997. The estate agent was gesticulating confidently at our sparkling row of new town houses with their big bay windows. This part of east London was up-and-coming; it was the next once-decaying inner-city dump to get the magical makeover from a hasty little army of invading professionals, painthrushes in hand, sanding machines at the ready.

It all seemed plausible, for a while. The nightmare didn't start for months. I remember the day I found the first brick in my front garden, just lying there, lumpy and stupid. "Funny," I thought. A day or two

later I noticed the hole in my brand new plaster and wondered...

Neighbours moved in to my right. Days later it came. "Crash" – and a hole in the front window that looked as if someone had fired a rocket-propelled grenade.

I went round and commiserated. This was an up-and-coming area and it was bound to be an isolated act, I said. But, deep down, I suspected it wasn't. That was when my sleep pattern fell apart, when I started lying awake, listening for noises in the night.

Quite suddenly, my new dream home became a fearful place. Now I returned with foreboding, my eyes straining to catch a first glimpse of that big bay window. Then

"smash" went the window two doors to my left. And "smash" went the window diagonally opposite, and "smash" went the entire bay window – not the pane, mind, the entire window – of the house opposite. And then "smash, smash, smash" went about half the car windcreens in the street.

That brought the first of my many phone calls to the local police station. "I just know I am going to be next," I wailed. "Do something." There was a contemplative noise, like someone sucking on a pencil. "Hmm, so you're saying you think there's a pattern? Because if you do [it was as if I was making a very daring deduction] we could [this sounded like a giant favour] put you in

contact with the community liaison officer." Then she seemed worried she had made too many promises, and added: "Not today, in a few days, that is."

I tried to get the community liaison officer the next day and was pulled up short. "If you only knew what she was dealing with right now [my mind raced – what was she dealing with? Genocide? A chainsaw massacre?] you wouldn't want her to be pulled off the case for your window." Chastened, I gave up, and went back to waiting patiently for my brick.

When I got the brick it was with a dull sense of the inevitable. I almost felt relief. There was commiseration from my neighbours and

murmurs of "awful", "ghastly", and "must do something". The police said they would make a note, but there was a manpower problem, you see, so it was best not to expect too much. Then I was alone in my living room, staring at the gaping hole, the brick, the strands of broken glass strewn over the carpet. Lucky I wasn't in the room at the time, I thought.

My up-and-coming area is starting to change. The house diagonally opposite has put up a heavy metal grille. So have two houses down to the left. Bit by bit we are all wiring and grilling and fencing ourselves in. By the time we have all finished, the street will look like some kind of strange, dispersed prison. And this is the groovy, beating heart of the capital. It's very handy for the City.

INDEPENDENT

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Culture of work faces family revolt

HERE IS a big notion: that the revolt against work could be the driving force behind the politics of the next decade. While the Prime Minister has been looking for a popular theme to give his "project" the same staying-power as Thatcherism, perhaps the answer has been closer to his two-earner home than he thought. Remember that the politics of Thatcher and Reagan were born in the taxpayers' revolts of the Seventies. In Britain it was the spectre of the 98 per cent marginal rate of income tax; in California it was Proposition 13, which blocked any rise in state or local taxes in 1978.

That kind of driving force has been missing in politics on both sides of the Atlantic, especially since Bill Clinton and Tony Blair reconciled their parties of the left to the end of "tax and spend". But perhaps we are already witnessing the next great issue on which the electorates of Britain and other industrialised nations will say, "Enough!" and demand a political response.

We report today that most working people in this country make sacrifices at home for the sake of their jobs, with half regretting that they missed their children growing up or that they put work before their families. "I hardly saw my children when they were younger. I never changed their nappies. I never fed them. I never got up in the night when they were crying because I was always exhausted from the day's work," says Paul Giggie. "Basically I was never there."

There is a big division between the sexes in how they balance the demands of work and family: on the whole, women do and men don't. But what is important is that this is an issue which has moved beyond the early arguments of feminists, in which the interests of men and women were assumed to be opposed. Younger men and younger women say they are not prepared to make the sacrifices for their careers that previous generations have made. Young men do not want to end up with Mr Giggie's regrets: young women are under no illusion that they can compete with men on equal terms in a work culture of long and inflexible hours.

A great revolution is occurring, but, as with any transition, there will always be conservatives for whom the glass of flexible parenting is half-full, while for radicals it is half-empty. Fathers already expect to be involved much more in their children's upbringing and to be fulfilled by that involvement. But it is still women who do the housework, even when both partners are in full-time paid employment.

Binology is one thing. But just because a woman takes a career break for birth and early nurturing it should not be assumed that she will always do the children things. Men's attitudes need to change more. But we are reaching a point where both men and women can see that it is in the interests of all for the culture of the workplace to change. This is not like the taxpayers' revolt in the sense that it is not so immediately in the Government's power to respond to the demand for flexible, family-friendly ways of working. But the state is a big employer and there is still much that the law can do to encourage flexible working. Futurologists have always predicted a dramatic reduction in working hours, and they have always been wrong. Perhaps in the 21st century they will at last be right.

Make second-home owners pay up

THE SUREST SIGN of a property boom is when we hear complaints that rural people are being priced out of the market by the Mercedes-driving classes snapping up weekend cottages in search of unspoilt nature. Viewed as part of the big picture, this is a shame, but the argument about a free market in property in this country was lost some time in the 16th century or thereabouts. And generally the arrival of moneyed incomers is a boost to the local economy, even if it does create chocolate-box ghost villages from Monday to Friday. With the decline of agricultural employment, the weekenders at least need someone to stock their fridges and weed their gardens.

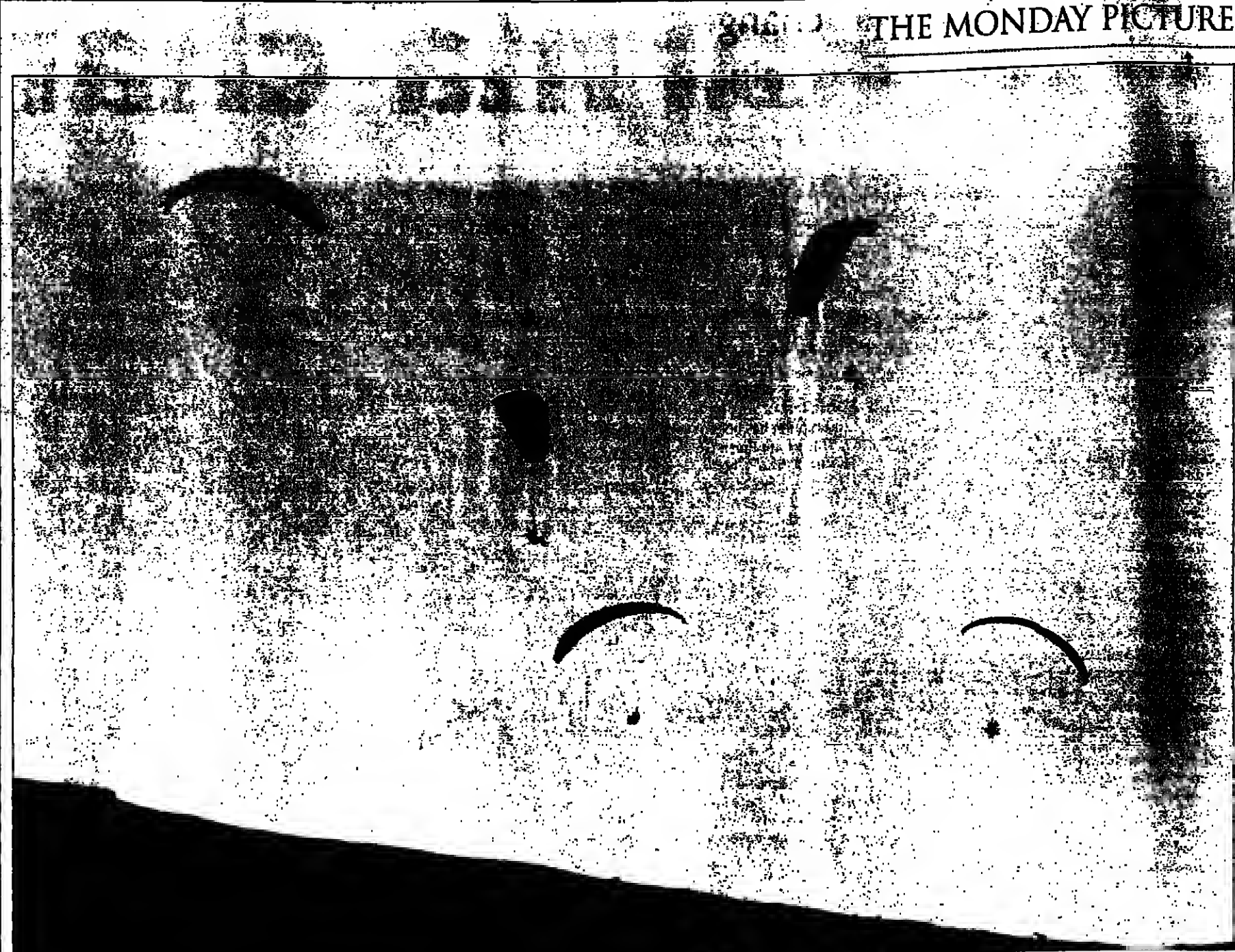
What annoys Liberal Democrat councillors in the Lake District is that second homes pay half council tax, a confusion left over from when Michael Heseltine ditched the poll tax. He could not decide whether the new tax was a property tax or a tax on people geared roughly to their ability to pay.

The justification for the half-rate for second homes was that their owners make fewer demands on local services. But that was always fatuous and open to abuse. It makes sense to tax property, so let us tax it consistently. As for "ability to pay", owning a second home is usually a good indication that that condition is satisfied. Of course, it is typical that it takes Lib Dem councillors to remind Labour ministers of the heady days of socialism back in 1993, when Jack Straw was charged with responding to the new council tax: the automatic 50 per cent discount for second homes would go, he said, leaving it to the discretion of local councils whether to charge. Such radicalism was dropped from the manifesto, but should now be restored.

Let the weekenders pursue Wordsworth's romantic dream - "Free as a bird to settle where I will" (on Saturdays and Sundays anyway). But let them pay for the privilege.

Stop-go economics

WELL, that didn't take long. Go has stopped. British Airways' cut-price airline has abandoned its flat £100 fare to European destinations after just nine days. Now customers will only get the £100 fare if they are "flexible about when they travel". Inflexible fliers will pay more. Well, that evens the score. Go effectively admitted that BA was subsidising a loss-leading strike against its low-cost competitors. "If we were to sell every seat on every flight at £100 we would not break even." But it has given up its attempt to drive competitors out of business remarkably quickly. It's no go for predatory pricing.



A sky dotted with hang-gliders above Castleton, Derbyshire

Photograph: John Voas

A 9x12 print of this photograph can be ordered on 0171-293 2534

Flinching from the poor

Sir: Clare Short is right to imply that images which portray people in developing countries as passive, helpless recipients of aid handouts are unhelpful ("Does this picture make you flinch?", 29 May). They fuel a stereotype of the poor which is as erroneous as it is degrading.

It is self-evident that, for the most part, the poor survive thanks to their own efforts combined with the support of others. But it is an appalling struggle, which is why long-term development is so necessary.

Emergencies are not inevitable and generally happen where development has not. In Sudan, for example, the emergency has been caused by the man-made war, the longest in Africa. The huge numbers of displaced people make development work difficult in the extreme. The failure is not that non-governmental organisations provide humanitarian aid but the absence of international pressure on the combatants to resolve the conflict.

Certainly we have launched an appeal to raise additional funds for the current crisis. What else should we do when 700,000 people are at risk? However, we have been working in Sudan on development projects for many years.

As for compassion fatigue, Clare Short surprises me. She was present in Birmingham when 70,000 people turned out to lobby the G8 leaders on Third World debt. Tens of thousands of people in Scotland give to SCIAF every year.

PAUL CHITNIS
Executive Director
Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund
Glasgow

Sir: Oxfam applauds Clare Short's passionate commitment to long-term development. However, our experience is that the British public's enormous commitment to humanitarian relief is not incompatible with their equally strong desire for long-term poverty eradication and political solutions to the conflicts that cause so much of the misery that we see on our television screens.

Those images depicting humanitarian crises may be shocking and moving but it is not Oxfam's experience that they make people turn away, as Clare Short suggests. An emergency appeal ethically presented helps to build a constituency of support for both emergency relief and long-term development. People who initially give to Oxfam for our emergency work continue to support our long-term efforts to tackle poverty.

NICHOLAS STOCKTON
Emergencies Director
Oxfam GB
Oxford

Sir: Enough of disaster pornography. I am delighted that *The Independent* gave prominent coverage to Clare Short's attack on the degrading and damaging appeals used by aid agencies to raise money.

The success of these appeals depends on ghastly photographs, usually a starving black baby who is being tended by a white angel of mercy, and a simplistic, apologetic message that disguises a political catastrophe as a "humanitarian" disaster that can be corrected by a short-term injection of outside assistance. They destroy political accountability; the politicians responsible for the misery are off the hook internationally and the domestic pressure for political change is weakened. So the same disasters recur with painful regularity. And of course the Western public, saturated with these images, assumes that Africans cannot manage their own affairs, and that there is little point in investing in long-term development.

RAKIYA OMAAR
Director
African Rights
London SE1

Sir: In a world saturated with images of starving African children, your

LETTERS

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Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

front page of 29 May would perhaps not make your compassion-fatigued readers "flinch". Why don't you try photographs of the enormous mansions in Highgate owned by various African governments, or how about African diplomatic wives emerging from some of the most expensive shops on Bond Street laden with purchases? I more than flinch constantly at the sight of either.

JUDITH MSTEINER
London N6

Sir: If this government and others in the developed world fulfilled the UN recommendation on percentage of GDP for overseas aid and tackled Third World debt, then Clare Short could properly address the long-term development of the poor nations and the voluntary sector could concentrate its limited resources on crises with the public's help.

PHINSON
Bourne End, Buckinghamshire

Doctors not forgiven

Sir: As the mother of Matthew Rundle, one of the children involved in the General Medical Council inquiry into heart operations at Bristol Royal Infirmary, I was extremely upset by the headline in *The Independent*, "My son died, but I forgive the surgeon" (30 May).

At the time Matthew was operated on I was very grateful to James Wisheart and staff for providing what I then thought was the best possible care. But there is no way that I can forgive Mr Wisheart or the hospital as I now know that I was misled about Matthew's chances of survival and the care that he was given.

I feel angry and cheated, as I shall never know if my son would have survived had he attended a different hospital, with more expertise. I can never "forgive" anyone for taking away my son and my peace of mind.

I fully support the Bristol Heart Children Group's demand for a public inquiry

MRS S J RUNDLE
Tintagel, Cornwall

Theatre of the absurd

Sir: Sir Denis Lasdun (Eye, 28 May) is right about the aesthetic misplacement of the bookshop at the "new" National Theatre, but it is also a devil for the audience to find. From outside the theatre it is highly visible (a goldfish bowl) but if you are circulating in the foyers it is a distant outcrop of grey concrete beyond the main entrance with one legend - BOOKSHOP - painted vertically from the floor, which is easy to spot if you are walking around with your head at an angle of 45 degrees to your body.

The old bookshop, with glass walls and in the middle of the ground-floor foyer, was a delight you came across as you had a drink or a coffee or paused to pass the time.

MONICA FERMAN
London NW6

Islamic bomb

Sir: The first nuclear bombs, dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were, although largely developed by Jewish scientists, "Christian" bombs. Almost immediately an atheist Russian bomb was developed, later a Jewish bomb. Last month the world learnt of a Hindu bomb.

It is only when Pakistan, a predominantly Muslim country, joins the mad world of "mutually assured destruction" that a draconian and all-embracing embargo is slapped on the country - led by the country that began the madness. Is this about nuclear lunacy - or the fact that it is Islamic nuclear lunacy?

FELICITY ARBUTHNOT
London E9

Naming secular babies

Sir: Sara Maitland's dismissal of secular naming ceremonies (Comment, 26 May) seems to bear little relation to the lives of many new parents today.

Clearly Maitland has not been to one of the ceremonies put together by parents with help from the Baby Naming Society, an organisation set up by Lord Young of Dartington in 1994. In these ceremonies, parents make promises to the child for his or her long-term welfare and other adults are appointed as supporters of the new family who also express this publicly. The promises are not prescribed, so the parents and godparents (who might be known by another title) have to decide what it is that they can promise. They have to talk about their hopes and aspirations as parents. The supporting adults have to consider what part they will play in the child's upbringing.

For non-Christians a baptism is meaningless and another ceremony in which they pledge themselves to their child can take on integrity and significance. If there are other adults willing to stand up and say they will keep watch over the child and be willing to offer love, friendship and guidance it would seem a very powerful way of creating new bonds between the child and society.

ROSIE STYLES
Director
Baby Naming Society
Pershore, Worcestershire

The perfect pizza

Sir: Aoife O'Riordan's article on pizza was most interesting (Fast Track, 28 May). I lived at one time with a Sicilian pizzaiolo. Whilst staying with his sister I was able to eat the real thing, and wonderful it was. The base was thick (certainly not thin and crispy) and the topping was sparse, although local herbs were added, and naturally she had the traditional oven. One of the things that sorts out the proper pizzas from the others is that the dough should be made the day before.

JILL HAMILTON
Geneva

Next-door neighbour's burglary ruined my life, 'passive sufferer' tells court



MILES KINGDON

TWO WEEKS ago I brought you an extract from a trial in which a postman was accused of biting a dog in self-defence. The item aroused unusual interest - at least, I received a fax from a TV producer at NBC News in New York, longing to know how the trial turned out, which goes to show that the Americans are still on the ball, even if it's the wrong ball.

Last Friday I followed this up with an extract from another trial, this time a case in which a woman is suing her neighbour for damage caused by passive suffering, and as I think passive suffering is the sort of concept likely to appeal to the Americans, I am bringing you another extract today.

Counsel So, Mrs Whittaker, because your neighbour kept talking about her burglary, and her narrow escape from violence, you claim that YOU started having bad dreams about HER experience. Do you really think it is possible to be emotionally affected by other people's experiences?

Plaintiff: Of course. The whole of the world of art is based on that premise. If I weep after reading the death of Little Nell, it is not because I knew Little Nell personally, or even because I believe she existed, which I do not. It is because of the power of the author's narrative. If I cry because of a fictional sadness, how much more so because of a real one? A brief smattering of applause from the jury.

Judge: One moment, one moment. Who is this Little Nell? And if she is dead, why is she relevant to this case?

Counsel: She is a well-known fictional character, my Lord. She features in a famous quotation from Oscar Wilde, to the effect that anyone must have a heart of stone who can read the death of Little Nell without laughing.

Judge: Oscar Wilde, eh? Are you calling him a witness?

Counsel: I had hoped that would not be necessary, my Lord.

Judge: Pity. I liked him in the film. He was very good in the court scenes. Carry on! Counsel: Very well, Mrs Whittaker. Let us look at it another way. Let us suppose for a moment that you ARE affected by the suffering of others, that your natural sympathy is bruised by the world's troubles around you. Does this in fact give you any right to sue the world for it? You cannot sue the weather for ruining your holiday! You cannot sue India and Pakistan for reviving the arms race and thus bringing depression to all those who watch the news! Indeed, you cannot sue the BBC for bringing you gloomy news!

Plaintiff: I agree. I don't want to sue them. I only want to sue Mrs Norman next door for going on and on and on and on about her bloody burglary! It's ruined my peace of mind. Her verbal preoccupation with it has affected my mental state as surely as a brick wall would affect my light. Her conversation has turned into an intellectual ver-

sion of a fast-growing *Leylandii* cypress! Another smattering of applause from the jury.

Counsel: Was that striking phrase suggested to you by your counsel?

Plaintiff: He may have mentioned the parallel with Mr Leyland's pervasive tree, and he may have coached me in that last speech. I cannot now remember.

Judge: When is this Mr Leyland? Will you be calling him as a witness?

Counsel: Not if it can be avoided. Now, Mrs Whittaker, let me put it to you that if we adopted your principle of passive suffering, life would be impossible!

Plaintiff: But life IS impossible - at least, it is if you live next door to Mrs Norman.

Counsel: I am thinking on a somewhat grander scale, Mrs Whittaker. I am thinking of people like policemen and doctors and psychiatrists, who encounter distress on a nine-to-five basis. I am thinking of counsellors and therapists and social workers, whose daily life IS other people's

suffering. I am thinking even of lawyers and judges, who daily have to endure heart-rending recitations of gruesome suffering!

Judge: Do we? Did I miss something?

Counsel: Are we not affected too? Yet can a doctor sue his patient for causing him distress? Should a psychiatrist sue the man on the couch for insisting on telling him his memories, false or otherwise? Should I perhaps sue you for forcing me to share in YOUR passive suffering caused by Mrs Norman? Can a Christian sue God for His heartlessness? Can God, even, sue his erring subjects for causing Him pain through their sins? Has political correctness finally reached the apotheosis of lunacy? A small standing ovation from the jury.

Several of them ask counsel for his autograph. Well, what do YOU think? If you think Mrs Whittaker is right, phone the YES line to the court. If you think counsel is clearly right, phone the NO line. Your decision is final.

هكذا من الأصل

There may be great changes in store for Tony Blair's ministers



DONALD
MACINTYRE

SUPPOSE Tony Blair suddenly woke up one morning, did a Boris Yeltsin, and sacked his entire Cabinet. He would lose some brilliantly talented individuals, starting with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. He would be uncaging some big and extremely troublesome beasts, allowing them to roam freely in the wild of the backbenches with goodness knows what consequences. But he could still form a plausible administration.

One bonus of 18 long years in opposition is that the four successive elections since 1979 have created quite a large pool of ambitious men and women capable of running departments. It might be tricky, but it wouldn't be impossible, to draw up a list of 22 middle-ranking and junior ministers who could fill the places of a Cabinet that had been run over, in its entirety, by a bus. (To underline the point, try the same exercise with the Conservative Party.)

Which makes it rather more surprising that we are still waiting for Tony Blair's first reshuffle. Originally, Easter had been pencilled in, but that opportunity was wiped out by the cliffhanger talks on Northern Ireland. Then Whitman was quite widely discussed within Whitehall as an alternative. Both have now come and gone, with some, no doubt unintended, consequences. One is that David Clark and Gavin Strang have to function loyally through more gruesome months being repeatedly tipped as candidates for the chop.

Of course, there are reasons for not reshuffling now. The heavy legislative programme, compounded by the six-month EU presidency, would mean a tiresome reallocation of half-completed tasks. Alistair Darling, a clear candidate for promotion, would have to abandon the public-spending brief he holds just as the hugely complex Comprehensive Spending Review reaches its climax. And so on.

Nor is this kind of wait unprecedented; Margaret Thatcher did not reshuffle her first Cabinet until 22 months after taking office. But there are differences. The greatest of which was that she had picked her own government—which Blair cannot really have been said to have done, because of the Labour Party rule that requires the Shadow Cabinet to form the first administration after an election victory. The next reshuffle will produce a Cabinet for whose failings Blair will take much more of the credit—and, if it underperforms, much more of the blame.

But there is another consequence, intended or not, of postponing the reshuffle once again: it becomes much less credible to confine it to one or two relatively minor posts and give all the rest the chance of another year to make or break their reputations. I would reckon that Blair regards Gordon Brown, Jack Straw, David Blunkett, John Prescott, and—in the main—Frank Dobson as having started. Robin Cook is in a category all of his own: brilliant when he is concentrating on specific tasks—such as the EU presidency—infinitely less sure when he is distracted by noises off. Beyond that the ratings are much more variable.

But reshuffles, whether they are radical or not, are not merely a matter of moving or sacking those without the required ability, charisma and popularity, and promoting those with them. Take one example. Mo Mowlam has performed heroically and imaginatively in Northern Ireland. She is the most popular politician in Britain apart from Tony Blair.

She is a certainty for promotion if and when she moves—possibly to a wide-ranging job equivalent to that of Tory party chairman. So far the assumption has been that she will remain for at least another year. But her relations with the Ulster Unionists are close to breaking point, a fact underlined by yet another attack on her by David Trimble in a radio interview yesterday. At some point she will become like an agent sent on a dangerous mission who has become inevitably compromised by her own courage and ability.

If and when she is promoted she could be replaced by Paul Murphy, widely regarded as a safe pair of political hands in Belfast. But a more sensational, and therefore more improbable solution might be to send Peter Mandelson to Northern Ireland. Most speculation has focused on whether Mandelson will be given another portfolio-free role, this time in the Cabinet, as an enforcer for the Prime Minister, firmly at the centre of power. But making him Northern Ireland Secretary might not be quite as outlandish as it seems.

It would satisfy the widespread demand from his enemies that he be given a wholly absorbing departmental responsibility to stop

The longer the reshuffle is delayed, the more radical it is likely to be

him interfering with those of others. By relieving him of responsibility for the Dome, it would allay fears that the project's popularity is being harmed by its inextricable association with the Minister without Portfolio. It would test him severely. And it could be presented as a sure sign that, post referendum, Blair is taking a continued and close interest in developments in Northern Ireland.

I do not think this is likely to happen. But it illustrates an important point about the twice-delayed reshuffle. The longer before it happens, the higher will be the expectations of the difference it makes. The less will the Prime Minister be able to advance the argument that his ministers have not had the time they need to play themselves in or to complete specific tasks that they have been allotted.

And the more radical a reconstruction, as a consequence, it is likely to be. Blair may be just that much more brutal in dealing with his weaker Cabinet colleagues. And just that much more imaginative in handling some of the stronger and more senior ones. The Prime Minister's press secretary said contemptuously a few months ago that reshuffle speculation was the "junk food" of political journalism. But the longer the delay the less junky the diet will prove to be.

Why can't Hindus and Muslims get along together? It's a long story ...



PETER
POPHAM

THE FIRST idea was to gather up some grains of the blasted, vitrified, radioactive sand from India's nuclear test site at Pokhran, cocoon them in a suitably pious-looking vessel, then cart them around the country for the faithful to worship and wonder at: radioactive sand, now on tour.

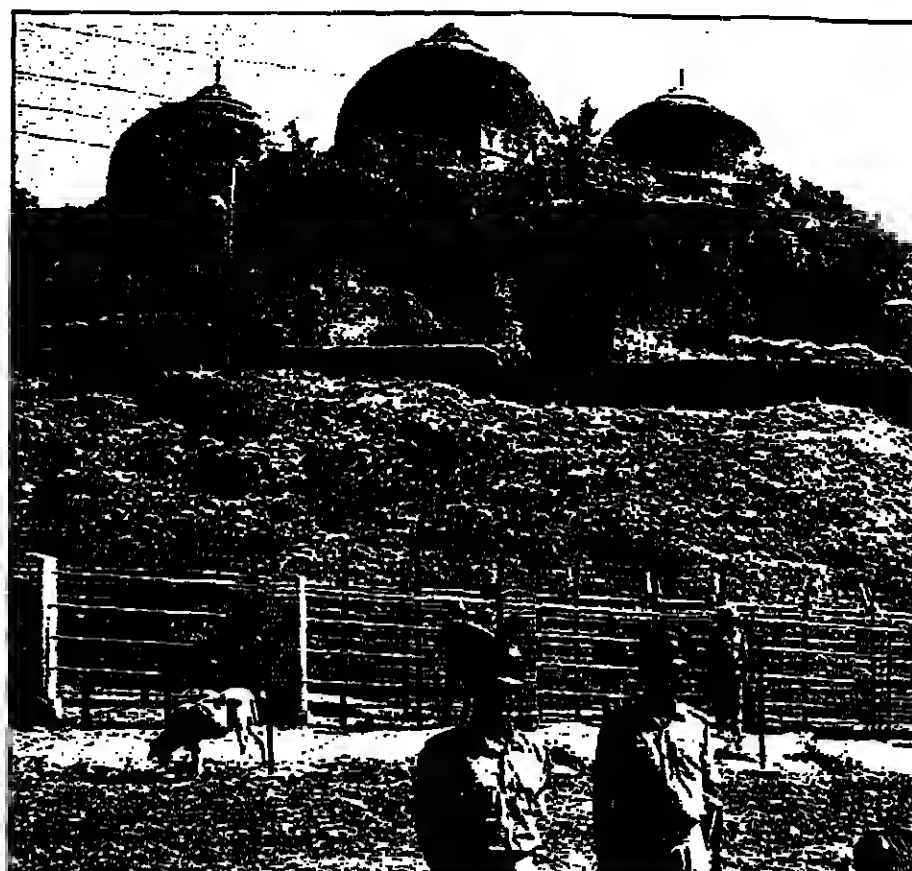
Then they had another think. The next idea they came up with was a Hindu temple to be erected on the same irradiated spot, in the furnace heat of the Rajasthan desert, "to provide an ocular reminder", as one of the boosters of the project put it in yesterday's *Sunday Times* of India, "of an event which established to the world that India could no longer be taken for granted".

Both of these projects may come to nothing. But they are a useful reminder that, while India's nuclear tests had military, scientific and political dimensions, they were also, in a particular sense, religious. And so were Pakistan's.

India's bomb was a Hindu bomb, Pakistan's bomb was a Muslim bomb. India's indigenous missiles are named Pritvi and Agni after Hindu kings. Pakistan's new long-range missile is named Ghauri, after an Islamic invader, one of many, who was the scourge of Hindus.

Religion, no less than in northern Ireland, is the area of contention in the Indian subcontinent, the mast to which the two sides nail their colours, and the long and frequently desperate history of the encounters of Hinduism and Islam is the inevitable backdrop to the ongoing nuclear hysteria in the region. A frightened and exasperated world is entitled to ask, what exactly is the problem here?

The two religions are, to begin with, about as different as two belief systems could be. Islam is monotheistic, proselytising, anti-idolatrous, fiercely doctrinal, with strong ideas about heresy. Hinduism is pantheistic, uninterested in converting unbelievers, an immense



Ayodhya Mosque before its destruction by Hindu nationalists

Photograph: Rex

aggregation of different gods, rites, superstitions and beliefs.

There was never going to be a neat fit between the two. But radically different religions do not have to fight. Elsewhere in Asia, Buddhism has coexisted with shamanism and Shintoism.

In the subcontinent, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism have rubbed along with indigenous practices for centuries.

But for nearly a millennium, Islam has been the religion and the badge of the subcontinent's invaders. A little more than a thousand years ago, Hinduism was attaining its apogee of artistic development in the won-

year after year for more. In 1024, greedy and emboldened, he marched as far as Somnath, on the west coast in what is now the state of Gujarat.

Somnath, it is said, possessed the richest and most magnificent Hindu temple in India, where every day 1,000 Brahmins worshipped the enormous lingam or phallus, emblem of the god Shiva. 13.5ft high and 4.5ft in circumference, while 300 men and women danced before it.

When they learned that Mahmud was heading their way, the Hindus persuaded themselves that Shiva had lured him to Somnath only to punish him, and they put up only fee-

"slave" dynasty and the Delhi Sultanate in the 13th, the Tughluqs in the 14th.

In 1398, Timur the Lame, known more familiarly to us as Tamerlane, a devout Muslim, the "scourge of God", roared in from the north-west and laid north India to waste. In the space of six months he is believed to have been responsible for 5 million deaths.

And so it went on. When the Mughal Empire was founded in Delhi in 1526, Mughals, of course, being Muslims, too, the Mongol descendants of Timur and Ghengis Khan, Islamic looting and plundering had become as much a fact of

India's bomb was a Hindu bomb. Pakistan's bomb was a Muslim bomb. Religion is the area of contention

derful temples of Khajuraho in present-day Madhya Pradesh, with their fabulous efflorescence of erotic sculpture.

A few years later, in 1000, the first wave of Muslim invasions began, when Mahmud of Ghazni swept down from Afghanistan into the Indus plains and plundered the Hindu temples of their vast wealth of jewellery, money and golden images.

It was too easy and too profitable, and he came back

ble and unorganised resistance.

In the ensuing massacre, according to nationalist historians, 50,000 Hindus were killed and the temple was razed to the ground. The holy lingam was smashed and carried to Ghazni in fragments, which were embedded, with vicious symbolism, in the steps of the chief mosque.

A ritual of invasion, depredation and humiliation was under way. After Mahmud, there was no end to it: Muizzu'd Din in the 12th century, the Turkish

north-Indian life as the sun going down.

The Emperor Akbar ushered in a long and remarkable Golden Age in the 16th century, marrying a Hindu princess and appointing Hindu ministers; but his successors, notably Aurangzeb (who became emperor 1658-1707), went back to the bad old ways.

By the time India came under the sway of the British, the endless invasions had left the subcontinent with an enor-

mous population of converted Muslims alongside the Hindus.

Ethnically they were identical; their languages, Urdu (written in Arabic script) and Hindi were essentially one and the same. The mass of them were equally poor, and though their religious practices differed violently—Hindus revering the cows, for example, which Muslims liked to eat—they lived cheek by jowl in their congested cities.

"It was a multicultural co-existence rather than any merger into a single, composite culture," writes the Indian psychoanalyst and author Sudhir Kakur. "Hindus and Muslims lived together separately. They were more than strangers, not often enemies, but less than friends."

Since the bloody partition of India that produced the Islamic state of Pakistan, controversy has raged over the nature of this coexistence.

According to the secularists, who, in the name of the Congress Party, have ruled India for most of the past 50 years, centuries of cohabitation have resulted in the weaving together of the Hindu and Islamic strands of India's cultural heritage, to the point where they form a single cloth and cannot be separated without violence.

As the secularists see it, it is the solemn duty of India's rulers not to pander to "communal" sentiment—not to prefer one religion or one group of believers over another—because that is the way to destroy society's fabric.

The Hindu nationalists, in contrast, argue that it is Islam's intolerance and claim to exclusive truth that has led to the destruction, over and over again, of Hinduism's treasures and the defilement of its holy places, and that India's fundamental problem has been the failure of Hindus to stand up and fight.

That is what, through militant organisations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) they have been trying for the past century to rectify. The demolition of the Babri Masjid Mosque in Ayodhya in 1992 was one way of doing that—the nationalists claimed the mosque had been built on the site of an important Hindu temple.

Now, at last, through the Hindu nationalist BJP they are in control of India's destiny. With hindsight, it should have surprised no-one that almost the first thing they did once in power was to set off an atomic bomb. They have a millennium of Islamic wrongs to right.

Yes, Geri – it's hard to break out when you're cast in plastic



ROSIE
MILLARD

WHAT most amazed me about Geri "Ginger" Spice's departure from the Fab Fivesome was that she said two years of superstardom had left her "disillusioned and exhausted". Exhausted I can countenance: think of the Pan Euro-

pean tour, the numerous videos, the endorsement of everything from Chupa-Chups to Impulse Bodyspray. Simply the amount of different costumes demanded by *Spiceworld The Movie* were enough to give everyone nervous exhaustion.

But disillusioned? For a band that invented the glorious manifesto of Girlpower?

Indeed, "girls" is the wrong label for the Spice Girls; they aren't girls any more than Tony Blair's new female colleagues are babes. These icons of pre-teen pop culture are switched-on business women.

Geri in particular has made an estimated £13m out of the venture; apparently she didn't go for the major shopping experiences favoured by the other four (who each made £10m), but saved her money for the day the bubble burst (yesterday at 2pm).

There is no question the Spice Girls have done well out of their stardom, and no one should begrudge them for it.

They knocked out some groovy tunes and proved to be as popular as well as populist. They made a pop bio-flick which could be enjoyed by the over-12s. They even dumped their manager at the height of their powers and made a go of it alone.

So why then was Ginger disillusioned? She never had a sex 'n' tell scandal; she never publicly resorted to drink, drugs or drying out; her legs were never outed as cellulite-covered.

She always managed to look the part, even when cringy footage of her former life as a Turkish gameshow hostess was

plastered all over the tabloids and television quizzes.

Perhaps Ginger's disillusionment came from the realisation that sometimes it is more fun to travel than to arrive.

The most exciting part of being a Spice Girl may not have been launching your own film in Cannes, or meeting everyone from Nelson Mandela to Prince Charles. It was pulling it off in the first place.

Of course, it was all fictional. Everyone knew the Spice Girls were as natural a creation as The Monkees, but for some odd reason the Mels, Baby, Posh and Ginger clicked as much as any "proper" band did.

And so Ginger might simply be yearning for the days when Turkish light-entertainment was still a recent memory, or that moment when, raw and unsigned, the Fivesome sang "Wannabe" before the head of A&E at Virgin.

Perhaps the fear of being disillusioned is why rich and famous people simply can't stay still. Richard Branson dives into the world of high-flying balloons; John Travolta transmogrifies himself into Bill Clinton for a film; even George Michael probably had method behind his recent madness.

However, the Spice Girls had to stay still. As with their distant cousin Barbie, they were cast in plastic.

I put it down to their nicknames. Never originally part of the plan, they became the most brilliant marketing tool of all.

When you're a Spice, you stand by your moniker. Which

means that Sporty can't ever really turn up in a ball-gown; Baby can't take a Masters degree; Posh can't slum around in a track-suit. And so it was for Geri: her glamourous creation simply wasn't flexible enough for her to move on.

There is, of course, another theory, highly laddish and rather patronising. According to some commentators, Geri left the Spice Girls because Mel B bullied her, laughed at her dancing and said she couldn't sing.

Girlie teasing? For a Turkish gameshow hostess who rose to make millions and became one of the familiar faces of the decade? Don't make me choke on my Chupa-Chup.

Rosie Millard is the BBC's arts correspondent.

Privacy loss

THE OMENS are not good for President Bill Clinton after Sunday night's debate at the Play Literary Festival. Robert Bennett, Clinton's silver-tongued American lawyer in the Zippertgate investigations, was teamed with the brilliant Stephen Fry and writer Adam Gopnik from *The New Yorker* to argue for the motion: "The private life of a public figure should remain private."

Opposed were former *Times* editor Simon Jenkins, investigative journalist Tom Bower (currently finishing his book on Mohamed Al Fayed) and author Gita Sereny, who wrote the recent controversial study of Mary Bell.

In the end, the Bennett/Fry/Gopnik team lost by an overwhelming margin, despite winner Sereny

having received boos at one point. This came after Bennett's rather wan argument that "Privacy is the most valued aspect of any civilized society."

Oh well, at least Bennett gave Welsh tourism a modest boost, saying: "I'm very glad to be here in Hay, otherwise I might have to be in Little Rock"—the appalling capital of Clinton's home state Arkansas.

Comrade's call

THIS GOVERNMENT'S iron paper discipline may have succeeded in marginalising the influence of most left-wing MPs in the chamber, but New Labour is still not taking its dominance for granted.

When word passed round recently that Tony Benn was scheduled for a tour of the party's Millbank

PANDORA

Tower headquarters, it sparked some frenetic spring cleaning.

Suddenly, the desks piled high with paper in Labour's engine room were cleared of any signs of rightist revisionism and the computer screens refreshed with innocuous images to welcome working-class hero Benn on his walkabout.

Planetary blues

DIRECTOR Terry Gilliam was in a mellow mood in the Groucho Club on Thursday evening. Just back from the Cannes screening of his latest film, *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, the ex-Python was unruffled by the

shocked reaction to some of his "gonzo" drug scenes from an audience that had included a large number of bourgeois French and politically correct Americans. The film doesn't romanticise drugs, Gilliam pointed out to Pandora, but shows "what happens when you take a large quantity of powerful drugs ..."

He had made the journey into Soho from his Highgate home to attend a very private concert at Planet Hollywood. The big draw was Bruce Willis (whom Gilliam directed in *Twelve Monkeys*) and his rock band.

Pandora hears that Willis's yawn-inducing gig was so "exclusive" that Gilliam was one of the few genuine British celebrities to bother attending, along with Elizabeth Murdoch, the lovely friend of Matthew Freud, who does PR for the themed burger restaurant.

Rose is a rose

THE MOST POIGNANT Viagra story to date should have a pleasing side-effect on one part of the population.

When 70-year-old American millionaire Frank Bernardo left his common-law wife, Roberta Burke, 61, the day after Viagra enabled him to make love for the first time in four years, he didn't go for a noble young bimbo, he flew into the arms of an older woman. Her name is Rose Garafola, 65, of Edison, New Jersey.

Though Rose is reportedly having second thoughts about the media attention, all ladies of a certain age should take heart and recall those Viagra-evocative lines from Shakespeare's first sonnet: "From fairest creatures we desire increase, That thereby beauty's rose might never die."

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Euroland faces wave of cross-border take-overs

THE WEEK AHEAD



DEREK PAIN

TAKE-OVERS - friendly and hostile - are meat and drink to the stock market. The economic environment and company trading performances are, of course, important influences but at the end of the day it is bids and deals which are the major inspirational force.

There is little doubt the deeply held conviction that major corporate activity is being prepared in London is helping to underpin equities.

This year has so far produced a handful of large deals although there has been a steady stream of action on the market's undercard.

In 1987 Britain accounted for more than 80 per cent of Europe's take-over action. As the Continent has caught the merger bug and deals have flowed with increasing strength the British percentage has fallen sharply and is now just under half.

It will probably decline still further although the overall value of domestic deals, as well as

those on the Continent, will continue to increase as transactions get bigger.

Ian Harnett at the BT Alex Brown investment house says Europe is set for a record year "with an increasing number of cross-border deals".

He believes that the signalled arrival of the euro is one of the factors behind the European upsurge. "The prospect of a new large market with a single currency has changed the horizons of companies," he says.

Inflation - or the lack of it - is another influence. "In an era of low inflation it is difficult to keep profits growing at the kinds of rate investors have become used to in previous years."

"If it is difficult to grow the top line then management will focus on cutting costs as a way to improve the bottom line. Looking for synergistic acquisitions becomes a key of achieving this aim."

Unbundling conglomerates,

often haphazardly thrown together, has also provided fuel for the take-over flames with businesses sold as a rag-bag of diversified activities being reorganised in recognition of the now more fashionable focused approach.

Then, of course, there is globalisation. "Monopoly considerations, which might have been viewed as an impediment to deals in the past, can be dismissed when one considers market share in a global context," Mr Harnett observes.

Large mergers since 1987 have totalled £273.4bn, with the average deal at £2.5bn. The Swiss, at £4.7bn, have the highest average with Britain next at £2.7bn. In the 11 years Britain produced 45 mega-deals - more than double the next busiest nation, France.

Mr Harnett calculates that more than 60 per cent of the take-overs have been domestic affairs, but the pattern is changing.

Not surprising in view of the common language and similar corporate culture, the Americans have played a far stronger predatory role in Britain than in Europe. Against the Continental ratio of three US bids out of 21, Britain has managed 10 out of 21.

Financials and utilities have provided much of the action. The Americans have plucked

in to many of the regional electricity companies and among financials to fall to overseas invaders are such renowned City firms as Kleinwort Benson, Smith New Court and SG Warburg.

It is not, of course, only proud City groups which have fallen. The Savoy Hotel has gone American, Rolls-Royce Motors is going German, a fate which may befall The Mirror. And Christie's International, the world famous fine-art auctioneer, is set to operate under a French hammer.

Southern Electric, the only "rec" still independent and quoted, is on the week's results list. It produces year's figures on Thursday and although the basic business should have performed well, profits will be dragged lower by the start-up costs of its gas venture, a poor contracting performance and higher interest charges.

Around £246m against £255.5m is likely. National Grid, which float-

ed its Energis off-shoot in December and returned £760m to shareholders, will offer year's figures near £488m against £685m tomorrow.

Thames Water, the biggest water utility, which may have suffered a cut-off in Indonesia, is also on tap tomorrow. About £408m, up from £371.5m is expected.

The three utilities will, no doubt, follow the already established pattern of handing out to the annoyance of their detractors, sharply increased dividend payments. Southern should go from 21.5p to 24p, Grid from 11.2p to 12p and Thames from 34.4p to 38.5p.

Boots, Siebe and Vodafone also feature on this week's reporting schedule.

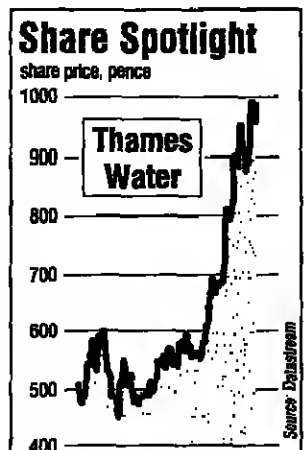
The tried-and-tested chemist shops formula continues, to underpin Boots. With Halfords and the opticians chain also increasing their contributions, profits of £550m (£536.2m) are expected. Even Do-it-all, the DIY operation,

should have cut its losses, from £9.5m to £500,000.

Engineer Siebe, with £3bn of corporate deals in two years, should achieve year's profits a touch over £500m against £417.1m. And Vodafone, regarded as a take-over target as the telecoms industry continues to consolidate, should manage an out-turn of just over £650m against £514m.

Pilkington, the glass maker, is busy cutting costs and it will be progress on this front, rather than profits, which will interest the market. It said last year it wanted to eliminate £190m of costs, involving 6,000 redundancies and shutting down unprofitable operations.

Paulo Scaroni, the new chief executive, is expected to say that around £100m of costs have already been taken out, which should be reflected in this year's figures. This week, however, a 15 per cent profit downturn to £11.2m in the year to March is expected to be announced.



Share Price Data

Prices are in sterling except where stated. The yield is the latest twelve months' declared gross dividend as a percentage of the share price. The price/earnings (P/E) ratio is the share price divided by last year's earnings per share, excluding extraordinary items but including exceptional gains. Gilt prices are Bloomberg Gilt prices. Other similar figures to Ex-dividend, Ex-Stock, Ex-Suspended, Ex-Partly Paid, Ex-Not Paid, Ex-PAID.

Source: Bloomberg

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6 months	5.00%	6 months	5.75%
12 months	5.00%	12 months	5.75%
3 months	3.00%	3 months	3.00%
6 months	3.00%	6 months	3.00%
12 months	3.00%	12 months	3.00%

Oil Exploration & Production

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
BP	10.50	10.50	10.50
Shell	10.50	10.50	10.50
Esso	10.50	10.50	10.50
Amoco	10.50	10.50	10.50
Exxon	10.50	10.50	10.50
Conoco	10.50	10.50	10.50
Unocal	10.50	10.50	10.50
Arco	10.50	10.50	10.50
Marathon	10.50	10.50	10.50
Phillips	10.50	10.50	10.50

Other Financial

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
Barclays	10.50	10.50	10.50
HSBC	10.50	10.50	10.50
Bank of America	10.50	10.50	10.50
Wells Fargo	10.50	10.50	10.50
Citigroup	10.50	10.50	10.50
JP Morgan	10.50	10.50	10.50
Goldman Sachs	10.50	10.50	10.50
Morgan Stanley	10.50	10.50	10.50
Deutsche Bank	10.50	10.50	10.50
Commerzbank	10.50	10.50	10.50

Telecommunications

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
BT	10.50	10.50	10.50
Telecom	10.50	10.50	10.50
Telefonica	10.50	10.50	10.50
Telecom Italia	10.50	10.50	10.50
Telecom France	10.50	10.50	10.50
Telecom Germany	10.50	10.50	10.50
Telecom Spain	10.50	10.50	10.50
Telecom UK	10.50	10.50	10.50
Telecom Netherlands	10.50	10.50	10.50
Telecom Belgium	10.50	10.50	10.50

Retailers, Food

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
Asda	10.50	10.50	10.50
Waitrose	10.50	10.50	10.50
John Lewis	10.50	10.50	10.50
Debenhams	10.50	10.50	10.50
Next	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50

Retailers, General

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
Asda	10.50	10.50	10.50
Waitrose	10.50	10.50	10.50
John Lewis	10.50	10.50	10.50
Debenhams	10.50	10.50	10.50
Next	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50

Pharmaceuticals

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
Asda	10.50	10.50	10.50
Waitrose	10.50	10.50	10.50
John Lewis	10.50	10.50	10.50
Debenhams	10.50	10.50	10.50
Next	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50

Property

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
Asda	10.50	10.50	10.50
Waitrose	10.50	10.50	10.50
John Lewis	10.50	10.50	10.50
Debenhams	10.50	10.50	10.50
Next	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50

Support Services

Company	Price	Weekly	Index
Asda	10.50	10.50	10.50
Waitrose	10.50	10.50	10.50
John Lewis	10.50	10.50	10.50
Debenhams	10.50	10.50	10.50
Next	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50
Primark	10.50	10.50	10.50

Source: Bloomberg

www.bloomberg.co.uk

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Travelers seeks stake in Nikko

By Lea Paterson

TRAVELERS, the US financial services conglomerate, is in talks to buy up to a 25 per cent stake in Nikko, the third largest Japanese brokerage, in a deal worth as much as ¥200bn (£1bn).

The Travelers/Nikko tie-up, which sources say could be announced as early as this week, comes just a month after Travelers and Citicorp, a US bank, announced details of their \$71bn (£42.5bn) merger. And it was only last September that Sanford ("Sandy") Weill, chief executive of Travelers and a consummate deal-maker, said he was buying Salomon Brothers, the US investment bank.

Deryck Maughan, co-chairman of Salomon, is in Tokyo talking to Nikko, according to press reports. Mr Maughan previously headed up Salomon's Japanese operations. Salomon Smith Barney - the bank formed by the merger of Salomon Brothers with Travelers' Smith Barney - was unavailable for comment yesterday.

A Nikko spokesperson said negotiations were continuing, but declined to provide details.

Industry sources said Travelers could this week announce that it was buying a stake of between 10 and 25 per cent in Nikko, which has been beset by financial problems in the wake of the Asian crisis.

The sources said the two companies were considering launching a joint venture between Salomon and Nikko - a new securities firm which would manage much of Nikko's institutional business, leaving the Japanese firm to focus on the retail sector.

The Travelers move would be the latest in a series of overseas investment in the Japanese financial services, made possible by the recent deregulation in the sector - the so-called Japanese "Big Bang".

In March, Merrill Lynch, the

US bank, took over branches of Yamachi Securities, the bankrupt Japanese brokerage. More recently, Goldman Sachs, Fidelity Investments, and HSBC - owner of the UK's Midland Bank - all forged alliances with Japanese banks.

"Japanese institutions are for the first time considering alliances with foreigners, and foreign houses are eyeing the opportunities being created by the 'Big Bang'," said Brian Waterhouse, of HSBC Securities in Japan.

It is unclear at this stage what the implications of any deal would be for the London employees of Nikko Europe, the Japanese brokerage's European arm. Both Salomon Smith Barney and Nikko Europe have substantial, and overlapping, operations in the City.

A Travelers/Nikko tie-up would be yet another notch on the bedpost for Sandy Weill, who created the Travelers conglomerate from scratch from doing deal after deal.

Although the Travelers/Citicorp deal, announced last month, will create a financial services powerhouse, the group is believed to harbour concerns about its Japanese presence.

Nikko, on the other hand, has had a series of catastrophic financial results, in part because of the Asian crisis.

Nikko has just reported that its group's losses narrowed by 43 per cent to ¥72.5bn (£326m) in the six months to March. In the equivalent period last year, it lost ¥127bn (£572m).

The Japanese brokerage, third largest after Nomura and Daiwa, has also been tarred by the "sokaiya" - or Japanese racketeer - scandal. Japanese regulators banned Nikko from trading on its own account for 10 weeks as a punishment for its part in the scandal.

Back in March, Moody's, the credit agency, downgraded Nikko's long-term credit rating.



GEC goes into action with virtual reality

WORK starts today on the construction of a £176m army training centre which should reduce substantially the number of live troop and artillery exercises. A consortium of GEC-Marconi and Lockheed Martin has been selected to develop the new combined

arms tactical trainer centre on Salisbury Plain near Warminster.

The centre will allow the Army to simulate tank battles with the aid of visual databases and computer-generated forces, rather than having to conduct live

exercises, such as those at Cope Hilldown, above. Lockheed said that it would save money, reduce environmental damage and improve safety. A similar centre is being installed for the British Army in Germany. Photograph: Christopher Jones

Rolls owners race to bid

By Clifford German

THE POSSIBILITY of yet another bid for Rolls-Royce Motors emerged at the weekend, after a group of Rolls owners said it hoped to top Volkswagen's £430m offer.

The millionaires' consortium of Rolls-Royce owners and dealers, led by Michael Shrimpton, are working flat out in an attempt to have a credible counter-offer on the table in time for a special meeting on Friday where Vickers shareholders - owners of the prestige car manufacturer - will decide the fate of the UK's most famous marque.

The meeting has been called to consider the relative merits of the two firm offers already on the table from the German car manufacturers BMW, which has bid £340m, and Volkswagen, which has upped its initial offer to £430m.

Mr Shrimpton claims to have firm commitments to top VW's offer plus the money

needed to finance further development of the company over the next three to five years. He has also promised Vickers shareholders that they will not have to wait for their cash any longer than they would from one of the two firm offers already on the table.

But he admits that it will not be possible to have all the necessary documentation needed to persuade Wall Street banks to release the cash to support the offer.

The best he can hope for is an adjournment of the two meetings called to consider the rival offers. Vickers initially accepted the offer from BMW but switched its allegiance last month to Volkswagen after it made an increased bid. BMW, however, has the support of Rolls-Royce plc which parted company with the car company in 1971 but still retains control of the use of the Rolls-Royce brand name.

BMW has close technical agreements with Rolls-Royce

plc and has offered to pay Rolls-Royce plc for the trade mark. However, it refused last week to increase its offer to Vickers. Volkswagen has promised to retain the existing British management of the motor company, to collaborate with Vickers in the development of a new all-British engine to replace the BMW engine which powers the newest Rolls models, and to invest up to £2bn in the development of the marque over the next five years.

Its plans would involve qua-

drupling the current annual output of Rolls-Royce and Bentley cars and offer guarantees of increased employment in the UK.

The consortium's efforts have been dogged by delays caused initially by the refusal of the Vickers board to take the consortium seriously and release the vital details of the proposed sale. The consortium itself had problems finding a merchant bank able and willing to work on its behalf.

Mr Shrimpton believes he



Michael Shrimpton says that he can top the offer by VW

Mirror chiefs await offer from Germans

By Lea Paterson

MIRROR GROUP executives are bracing themselves for a bid this week from Axel Springer Verlag, the German media company which owns Bild Zeitung, Germany's best-selling tabloid newspaper.

Speculation has surrounded the Mirror's future after Takeover Panel concerns forced Axel Springer to admit its interest 10 days ago.

The German media company has yet to make a formal offer for the group, whose interests include Live TV, the cable station, and a variety of regional newspapers as well as its Mirror titles. However, sources say Mirror Group executives believe a bid could come as early as this week.

Mirror shares have surged by 20 per cent over the last two weeks to close at 248.5p on Friday. It is thought group executives would be unwilling to accept any offer below 300p. Axel Springer, however, which has hired Andersons and Westdeutsche Landesbank as advisers, is believed unlikely to table an offer significantly above the current share price.

Axel Springer's interest has already forced one other potential bidder to show its hand - Trinity, the regional publishing group. Discussions between the two groups, which started several weeks ago, have been halted until the Axel Springer situation is clarified. No other bidders have yet emerged, but speculation has focused on the

possible involvement of Candover, the venture capital group, and Newsquest, a regional newspaper group.

Strict rules on cross-media ownership would seem to rule out an offer by UK broadcasting groups, according to analysts. A bid from another UK national newspaper group would almost certainly be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, and could well be blocked.

Kelvin MacKenzie, Mirror Group deputy chief executive and former Sun editor, is thought likely to be offered a central role if the Axel Springer deal goes ahead. The future of David Montgomery, chief executive, is less clear.

Monty's manoeuvres, Section Two

Midshires' £5m opens the way for Halifax

By Lea Paterson

ROYAL Bank of Scotland this week cleared the way for Halifax to make a formal approach to Birmingham Midshires Building Society when the Scottish bank releases Midshires from an exclusivity agreement signed last August.

Midshires, which has been banned from talking to other suitors since Royal Bank tabled a £630m bid, is to pay it a £5m "escape fee". The bank will receive an additional £10m from Midshires if the building society eventually falls to Halifax.

Halifax made a £780m offer for Midshires in March. The development, which comes after weeks of deadlock, bodes well for Midshires members, who will each receive an additional £150 if the Halifax deal goes through. Analysts

believe other potential bidders such as Barclays and Lloyds TSB - could emerge.

The Royal Bank dismissed reports of a split between Viscount Younger, its chairman, and George Mathewson, its chief executive, over the line of management succession.

It had been rumoured that Viscount Younger, who is 66, had informally approached Sir Iain Vallance, chairman of BT, and offered him the chairmanship. According to press reports, relations have soured between Mr Mathewson - frequently tipped as the next Royal Bank chairman - and Viscount Younger after Mr Mathewson backed a £30bn merger with Halifax.

The bank said the two had an excellent relationship and speculation about the succession was premature.

RAC sale to bring £1,000 staff payout

By Clifford German

The RAC's 5,200 staff will each receive a cash pay-out of £1,000 if the members of the motor organisation approve the plans to change the club's constitution and sell its services to Centand, the United States based company, for £450m.

The pay-out is part of the package of proposals sent out last week to the 12,000 full members of the RAC who themselves will receive £34,000 each if they approve the sale package at the club's EGM on 19 June.

The pay-outs will go equally to all employees - including the clubhouse staff, breakdown staff and employees of RAC motorsport - who were employees on 26 March, when the then non-executive chairman Geoffrey Rose kicked the club into play by writing to the full

members promising them a pay-out.

Mr Rose was forced to resign six weeks before he was due to retire because of the premature disclosure of the club's plans but remains a full member and will receive the pay-out to which he would have been entitled if he had remained as chairman until his intended retirement date of 20 May.

The three members of the club's executive board, including chief executive Neil Johnson, will also receive bonuses of up to one year's salary.

The package also sets aside £17m to endow the two clubhouses, at Pall Mall in London and the Woodcote Park country club, plus £13m to endow the RAC Foundation which carries out studies on the relationship between motoring and the environment.

IN BRIEF

Finance service laws 'will last'

GOVERNMENT plans to bring in a single regulator for the financial services industry by 2000 are on track, Alistair Darling, chief secretary to the Treasury, is expected to say today.

A broad framework has been agreed on legislation for financial services to create a system that will endure, he is expected to tell the Financial Services Authority's European Conference in London.

Changes coming into force today represent the first stage of the Government's reforms. Mr Darling will say they give the Bank operational independence in monetary policy as well as moving banking supervision to the FSA. The next stage is the new Financial Services legislation which will be published in draft in the summer.

10,000 call jobs

SITEL UK, which provides outsourcing services for call centres, is to create 10,000 jobs in the UK over the next five years. Paul Cresswell, Sitel's managing director, said leading market analysts support his view that call centres were the growth industry in the UK. Sitel has six operations across the UK. Its clients include The Daily Telegraph, Boots and Nissan.

Malaysia slump

ECONOMIC growth in Malaysia has turned negative for the first time in 13 years, the Malaysian government announced. Gross domestic product contracted by 1.8 per cent in the first quarter, the first quarterly contraction since 1985. Meanwhile, in Hong Kong, investors were braced for another rocky stock market ride after its government revealed the territory had slipped into recession for the first time in 13 years.

Home time

THE BOOMING housewares market is one of the great opportunities in the UK retail market, a report says today. The market, which includes items such as crockery, lighting and soft furnishings, grew 50 per cent faster than all retail sales last year with a similar out-performance expected over the next few years. The report, by the retail consultants Verdict, says that housewares remains a highly fragmented market offering scope for significant expansion by the big chains.

SEC to float

SEC, the IT and recruitment specialist, plans to raise £3m by listing on the AIM market this summer. SEC was set up in 1987 and made £1.4m pre-tax on a turnover of £9.3m in the year to the end of December and is expected to have a market capital of around £20m. Separately, Policy Master, the insurance technology provider, also announced plans for an AIM flotation.

Compass bought

LOPEX, the communications and marketing company, is to buy Compass Marketing for £2.7m. Compass Marketing specialises on devising and administering loyalty schemes. Peter Thomas, chief executive of Lopex, said: "Compass Marketing will be rebranded under the Purchasepoint name, our sales promotion brand, and will add regional coverage, critical mass and loyalty card expertise to Lopex group's marketing services activities."

A week in the markets

STOCK MARKETS

Index	Close	Wk's chg	Wk's chg %	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield %
FTSE 100	5870.70	-84.90	-1.43	6150.5	4382.8	3.77%
FTSE 250	5901.40	3.50	0.06	5920.9	4384.2	2.85%
FTSE 350	2864.90	-32.90	-1.14	2938.7	2141.8	3.55%
FTSE All Share	2802.18	-31.13	-1.10	2891.12	2106.59	3.55%
FTSE SmallCap	2772.10	-15.30	-0.55	2793.8	2182.1	2.98%
FTSE 100	1506.40	-3.10	-0.21	1511.1	1225.2	3.01%
FTSE 100	1132.50	0.50	0.04	1138.5	966.9	1.05%
FTSE EURO 100	1031.84					
Dow Jones	8899.55	-147.97	-1.62	9267.91	0	1.58%
Nikkei	15670.78	-130.87	-0.83	20810.79	14488.21	0.86%
Hang Seng	8934.56	-821.42	-8.50	16820.31	7908.13	4.58%
Dax	5689.08	4.87	0.09	5664.84	3487.24	2.75%

INTEREST RATES

UK Interest rates				US Interest rates			
Rate	3 months	1 year	10 year	Rate	3 months	1 year	10 year
UK	7.50	0.88	7.50	0.44	5.75	1.52	5.55
US	5.50	-0.18	5.50	-0.35	5.55	-1.11	5.60
Japan	0.85	-0.04	0.55	-0.36	1.46	-1.37	2.85
Germany	3.50	0.40	3.50	0.53	4.80	-1.04	5.43
							-1.31
BOND YIELDS							
Index	3 months	1 year	10 year	Long bond	1 year	10 year	Long bond
UK	248.50	30.50	17.49	14.22	557.50	-65.00	-14.85
US	924.00	81.50	14.22	14.22	457.50	-68.00	-13.02
Japan	217.50	14.00	13.58	13.58	1800.00	-120.00	-10.99
BAA	781.50	63.50	11.70	11.70	575.00	-60.44	-10.85
CMG	1720.00	123.70	11.06	11.06	352.00	-28.50	-10.55

CURRENCIES

£/\$	£/¥	£/DM	£/A\$	£/NZ\$	£/S\$	£/HK\$	£/KRW	£/INR	£/RMB
Dollar	1.6330	+0.11c	1.8409	0.6124	-0.04c	0.6094	1.7843	+2.00c	1.6996
D-Mark	2.9139	+4.35c	2.7836	1.3891	+0.02c	1.1626	139.81	+0.25c	116.26
Yen	228.76	+0.25c	190.63	103.60	+1.20	99.10	111.60	1.50	102.70
E index	103.60	+1.20	99.10	111.60	1.50	102.70			
OTHER INDICATORS									
Index	Close	Wk's chg	Yr Ago	Index	Close	Wk's chg	Yr Ago	Index	Close
Brnz Oil (\$)	14.81	0.45	19.57	GDP	114.70	2.90	111.47	Jul	
Gold (\$)	292.95	-5.50	345.75	RPI	162.50	4.00	158.35	May	
Silver (\$)	4.95	-0.38	4.72	Base Rates	7.25		6.25		

TOURIST RATES

Country	Rate	Country	Rate
Australia (\$)	2.5215	Malta (lira)	0.6182
Austria (schilling)	19.74	Mexico (nuevo peso)	12.77
Belgium (franc)	58.04	Netherlands (guilder)	3.1660
Canada (\$)	2.3047	New Zealand (\$)	2.9164
Cyprus (pound)	0.8244	Norway (krone)	11.38
Denmark (krone)	10.77	Portugal (escudo)	285.56
Finland (markka)	8.6079	Saudi Arabia (riyal)	5.9241
France (franc)	9.4266	Singapore (\$)	2.5752
Germany (mark)	2.8209	Spain (peseta)	238.40
Greece (drachma)	480.25	South Africa (rand)	8.1259
Hong Kong (\$)	12.21	Sweden (krona)	12.41
Ireland (punt)	1.1128	Switzerland (franc)	2.3397
India (rupee)	62.20	Thailand (baht)	58.71
Israel (shekel)	5.4618	Turkey (lira)	401458
Italy (lira)	2783	USA (\$)	1.5881
Japan (yen)	221.12		
Malaysia (ringgit)	5.8399		

Rates for indication purposes only
Source: Thomas Cook

مكتبة من الأدب



EDWARD BALLS ON FISCAL AND MONETARY TARGETS AND THE NEW POWER CONFERRED ON GOVERNMENTS BY GLOBALISATION

The secret of success is candour and clarity

TODAY, just 13 months after the General Election, the Bank of England's operational independence officially becomes law. The new Act sets a standard for openness, transparency and accountability in monetary policy making which no other major country can surpass.

In May last year, Labour inherited an economy in which monetary and fiscal policy were too loose, sterling had appreciated substantially and underlying inflation was set to rise above 4 per cent this year. Decisive action has been taken to put the economy back on track – through higher interest rates and the largest in-year fiscal tightening since 1981 – but the lags are long and risks remain.

What can be said, with greater confidence, is that the new monetary arrangements have worked impressively well. To be sure, some details have been refined since the Chancellor's letter to the Governor last May. The content of the monthly minutes have become much fuller and clearer as the year has progressed. Some argue that six weeks (the maximum specified in the Act) is too long a period between monetary meetings and the publication of minutes.

Nonetheless, the new Act confirms in law a new institutional framework which represents a decisive improvement on what came before. The previously confusing and unsatisfactory inflation target has changed: the target is now precisely defined. The suspicion of political manipulation of interest rates which dogged the previous chancellors is gone: there is a clear division of responsibility between the government, which sets the target, and the Monetary Policy Committee, which sets interest rates to meet that target and, without prejudice to that objective, to support the Government's objective of high and stable levels of employment. The appointments to the MPC have been well received. The Court is now far more rep-

resentative – geographically and from both sides of industry. And the House of Commons Treasury Committee has an enhanced role in scrutinising monetary policy – a challenge to which it has more than risen.

More important, the new monetary arrangements place the higher standards of openness and transparency, as well as accountability, at the heart of British economic policy. In so doing, they reflect a trend towards open policy-making which is gaining increasing international acceptance.

The globalisation of the world economy means that policy-makers must pursue stability – a necessary pre-condition for sustained growth and full employment – through new means. But far from rendering governments impotent, global capital markets actually make governments more powerful in their ability to do good or bad. Governments which pursue monetary and fiscal policies which are not seen to be sustainable in the long term, or attempt to conceal the fact through short-term deceptions, are punished hard these days – and much more rapidly than 30 or 40 years ago. When mistakes occur, and credibility is lost, it takes a long time to repair the damage. Conversely, governments which pursue, and are judged by the markets to be pursuing, sound monetary and fiscal policies can quickly attract significant inflows of new investment capital.

Good are the days of fixed policy rules announced in public, and secret deliberations behind closed finance ministry doors, with little or no justification or explanation of policy decisions or mistakes. Fixed policy rules were the old route to credibility. But, as the UK monetarist experience shows, persisting with fixed monetary targets, when previously stable relationships break down and the aggregates run out of control, can have disastrous consequences. Because the previous government repeatedly staked its cre-

G7 central banks: openness and transparency

	UK	US	Japan	Germany	France	Italy	Canada	ECB
Dates of monetary meetings pre-announced	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?
Interest rate decisions taken at meeting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?
Reasons for decision announced immediately	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?
Minutes of monetary meeting published	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?
Regular publication of inflation report	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?
Regular publication of inflation forecast	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?
Regular reporting to parliament	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

dentials on following monetary and exchange rate rules, it – and the economy – was faced more than once with a heavy price for breaking them, both in lost output and jobs and in lost credibility.

The modern route to credibility, in the face of volatile and unpredictable financial flows, is, instead, clear long-term policy objectives, well understood procedural rules for monetary and fiscal policy that keep markets and the public properly informed and ensure that both objectives and decisions are seen to be credible. Transparency about objectives and the reasons why decisions are taken, and checks on the ability of government to manipulate the flow of information, make it less likely that investors will be suspicious of government intentions. They also allow greater flexibility of policy to react to real crises and make it easier to build a consensus for difficult decisions.

Which is why a commitment to transparency and clear procedural rules lies at the heart of the UK's new fiscal and monetary framework. Fiscal policy is now set

to achieve clear, prudent and unambiguous rules: the golden rule – to balance the current budget on average over the economic cycle – and to stabilise the ratio of debt to GDP at a prudent level over the economic cycle. The Code for Fiscal Stability enshrines much greater openness and transparency in legislation.

So in monetary policy, clear procedural rules and accountability have been augmented by a new commitment to openness in place of the Treasury secrecy of the past. MPC minutes are published with details of votes cast. The quarterly Inflation Report explains how the Bank is setting policy to meet its objectives. The Forward Book of foreign exchange transactions is published with a lag. There is now far more open discussion of the optimal balance of monetary and fiscal policy than there ever was pre-independence.

But more importantly, this openness is designed to preserve constrained discretion. Policy is set to achieve an inflation of 2.5 per cent. But if the actual inflation rate were to go more than one

percentage point either side of the target then the Governor will write an Open Letter to the Chancellor explaining why this has occurred, how long it is expected to persist, the action the MPC is taking to get inflation back to target and how this is consistent with its objectives.

The importance of openness and transparency is increasingly accepted internationally, as the decision to ask the IMF to draft codes of conduct for transparency in fiscal, monetary and financial policy demonstrates. But it is particularly important for a new institution with new responsibilities such as the reformed Bank of England or the European Central Bank – institutions which cannot rely on immediate financial market credibility or public understanding or support.

The Maastricht Treaty, as the table on the left shows, is surprisingly undemanding on transparency and accountability grounds. Nor does it rule it out. The ECB could set a clear inflation target, endorsed by Ecofin, which could reinforce political support for the ECB's interest rate decisions to meet that target. Publishing minutes regularly alongside an inflation forecast could help build not only market but also public understanding and tolerance, especially when times are hard and difficult decisions must be made. Publishing votes of all board members could both dampen destabilising speculation and guarantee proper accountability for national, as well as the European, parliaments.

Which is why Europe, and the EMU countries, would be wise to embrace this transparency approach. Some say a six-week delay between monetary meetings and the publication of minutes may be too long for the Bank of England. But 16 years looks much too long for the ECB.

Edward Balls is the Chancellor's Economic Adviser.

Egan tipped as MEPC chairman

By Clifford German

Sir John Egan, the chief executive of BAA, the UK's largest airport operator, is tipped to take over as non-executive chairman of the UK's third-largest property group MEPC this week. An announcement is expected to coincide with the release later this week of MEPC's results for the six months to the end of March.

He will replace Lord Blakenham, who is due to retire this year. Sir John made his name in the Eighties as chairman of Jaguar, the luxury car maker which was bought off from the ailing BLMC, bought and then sold to Ford for £250 in 1989.

Since he moved to BAA, Sir John has been credited with the policy of developing shopping malls on the company's sites at leading airports, including Heathrow and Gatwick, into a £500m property portfolio.

Sir John is said to have been chosen ahead of Oliver Stockman, the finance director of Barclays Bank and already a non-executive director of MEPC. His appointment would signal a fresh start for MEPC. The company's turbulent history included a massive expansion programme at the height of the property boom in the late Eighties that led to several years of underperformance. Last year it fell out of the

FTSE 100 share index after it rejected a bid from Hamersson. The company also had unsuccessful discussions with Burford and then took over the assets of PSIT last year.

In the full year to the end of September profits fell 40 per cent to £84.1m after unwinding interest rate swap deals at a cost of £73.2m, and £9m of restructuring costs. At the time chief executive James Tuckey announced plans for further asset sales in the US and Australia, a move to a smaller head office and the return of capital to shareholders this year.

Since the year end it has realised £300m from the sale of a portfolio of small properties.



Egan: Will take over as UK's third largest property group

Competition in electricity 'to halve the number of suppliers'

By Michael Harrison

MORE than half of the country's electricity suppliers could disappear once the domestic market is opened to competition from this autumn, a report predicts today.

The study says the market could fall from 15 players at present to between four and seven as a result of mergers and acquisitions or some existing players withdrawing altogether. Coopers & Lybrand, which carried out the study based on a survey of top directors in each of the companies, says that the

reduction in suppliers will take place over six years with most of the consolidation taking place in the first two or three.

The Government has already proposed splitting up electricity supply and distribution into separate operations in a move which could herald a wave of mergers among supply businesses. The industry has, however, rejected proposals put forward by the electricity regulator Professor Stephen Littlechild, calling for the ownership of supply and distribution to be separated.

The two companies expect-

ed to compete most aggressively in the deregulated market are Scottish Power and Eastern – both are in the first wave of competition and both have set themselves up as multi-utilities.

British Gas is perceived to be the biggest external threat to the industry. Centrica, which trades under the British Gas name, is offering electricity customers up to 15 per cent off their bills.

The report says that many of the supply companies will become unprofitable if they lose more than 15 per cent of their customers. Taken together, the 15 companies expect to in-

crease their markets by 50 per cent but customer growth is only forecast at 2 per cent.

The key to success in the deregulated market will be the ability to offer a bundle of different utilities. Although three of the existing electricity suppliers – Scottish Power, United Utilities and Hyder – also own water companies, the study says water and electricity are the least likely mix of offers.

The products most likely to be marketed alongside electricity are gas, home contracting and home security, banking, insurance and telecoms.

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The quarry industry is going on the offensive to establish its green credentials, but Michael McCarthy unearths a deeper strategy

The good versus the bad and ugly

It will be as intense an effort as an industry has ever made at convincing the public that it should be numbered among the Good Guys.

And if Minerals 98 helps the Government get the message too, and not impose a swingeing environmental tax on the extraction of aggregates – sand, gravel, and crushed rock – that could cost it hundreds of millions of pounds annually, then the quarrying industry will be even more pleased.

For a week, later this month, and then in open days all over the summer, many of Britain's quarrying and mining firms will be working hard to show that they act responsibly and care about the environment and their place in society, and that the scarred landscape is not the sole image by which they should be judged.

Starting on 21 June, the industry will be staging no fewer than four big conferences on successive days, featuring Government ministers, leading industrialists, senior geologists and other scientists, environmentalists and educationalists.

Then nearly 150 quarries and mines will throw open their gates to the public to show they have nothing to hide, and more, that they have a positive – but unappreciated – story to tell.

The campaign chairman, John Mortimer, wants to broaden the appeal of minerals and make people realise that aggregates, china clay, salt, chalk, coal, gypsum, potash, fuller's earth and iron ore, in one way or another, underpin all our lives.

"We can't imagine anything in our society without minerals being there," Mr Mortimer says. "They're absolutely essential. You can't travel along a road, go into your home, go into a hospital, without minerals. Everything around you relies on minerals which we extract and process. But people don't put it together."

Mr Mortimer, a senior executive with the building materials company ARC and the chairman of the CBI's minerals committee, thinks the industry has had an unfair press.



Quarry owners want to woo the public with open days at selected sites, such as the restored sand and gravel quarry at Birnie Loch in Fife, below, but are not so enthusiastic about walkers exploring less picturesque holes in the ground, such as Eldon Hill in Derbyshire, above

"It's inevitable. The media will naturally focus on what people perceive to be problems, rather than good stories, and it's part of Minerals 98 to bring the good stories to people's attention."

He has in mind such developments as Birnie Loch, a restored sand and gravel quarry in Fife, where the quarry company, Pioneer Concrete, has transformed an exhausted site into an award-winning nature reserve.

The former Kinloch quarry now has an increasing resident and migrant bird population and a growing number of insects and wild flowers in the new habitats the company has created, including islands in the loch, shingle spits, wooded areas and a marsh. Public access is extensively catered for.

The company plans to do something similar with the two other sites it is currently working in Scotland, one for sand and gravel and the other for hard rock. At Hart Hill quarry

at Tams Laup, Larnarkshire, it is in the middle of £1m worth of environmental improvements that are already being carried out while stone is being extracted.

"I think there's a move by the industry to put its house in order," says Andrew Golder, the company's area manager.

"In the past quarrying companies haven't done a good enough job of restoring sites and making them more acceptable, and in certain cases criticism was justified. But

we're changing, and we're very conscious of the need to change."

Mr Mortimer goes further. "We want to show people we can do this job in a way that doesn't cause people problems and doesn't cause them heartache," he says. "And if we get it right, they won't even know we're there."

It is a contention that will be loudly disputed by environmentalists over the next month, and especially by Friends of the Earth, the Council for National Parks and the Council for the Protection of Rural England.

They say the quarrying industry is a business of outdated views which sees no realistic environmental limits on its activities, unlike, for example, the road building and housing industries, which have had to accept that they cannot simply

continue to swallow greenfield sites. The core of the problem, the green groups say, is the eagerness of the companies to exploit sensitive landscapes in highly protected areas such as national parks, in particular the Peak District National Park, which is under assault from firms seeking the limestone that gives the park its distinctive landscape.

"They can all try to beautify a hole in the ground after they've dug it," says Julian Tippet, a local campaigner in the Peak Park. "But they never stop to think about whether they should dig it in the first place."

The environmental pressure groups all instance the behaviour of the giant company RMC at its quarries at Eldon Hill and Longstone Edge in Derbyshire.

Two years ago RMC was refused a time extension to its permit at Eldon Hill, due to expire in September 1997; the company merely vastly increased its dynamiting of the hill, creating a stockpile of 1.5 million tonnes of limestone, worth £15m, which will not be shifted for another year: giving it, in effect, a two-year extension by the back door.

Eldon Hill is now the biggest scar on the park's landscape, visible for miles around. Shortly afterwards the company planned to turn what was originally a Derbyshire fluorspar mine into a limestone superquarry that would have destroyed Longstone Edge, a park ridge much loved by walkers.

The Peak Park Planning Board refused, and the company says it has accepted the refusal, although the owner of the site is seeking leave in the High Court next month to challenge the decision by judicial review.

During this time, RMC was also seeking a large extension to its quarry at Spaunton in the North Yorkshire Moors National Park, which was finally turned down by the Deputy Prime Minister and Environment Secretary, John Prescott, six weeks ago.

The company is having open days at eight of its quarries – but not at any of those sited in a national park.

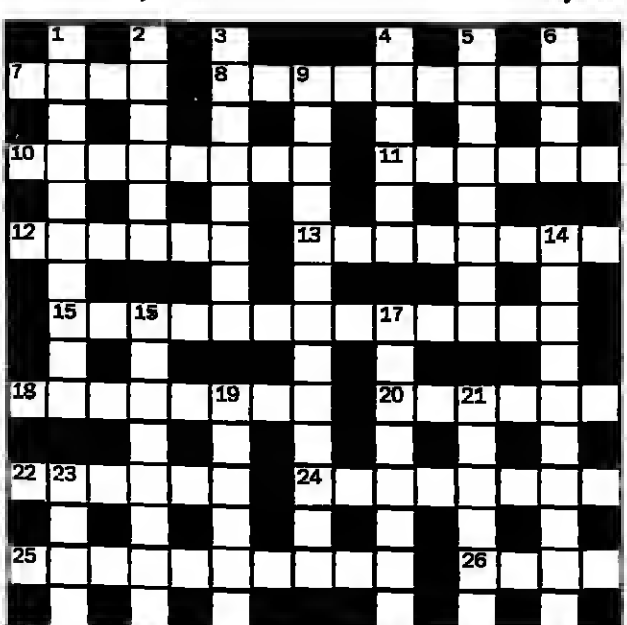
"Minerals 98," said Robin Maynard, of Friends of the Earth, "is a simply a PR exercise seeking to take the heat off an unsustainable dinosaur industry."



THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3625, Monday 1 June

By Fortia



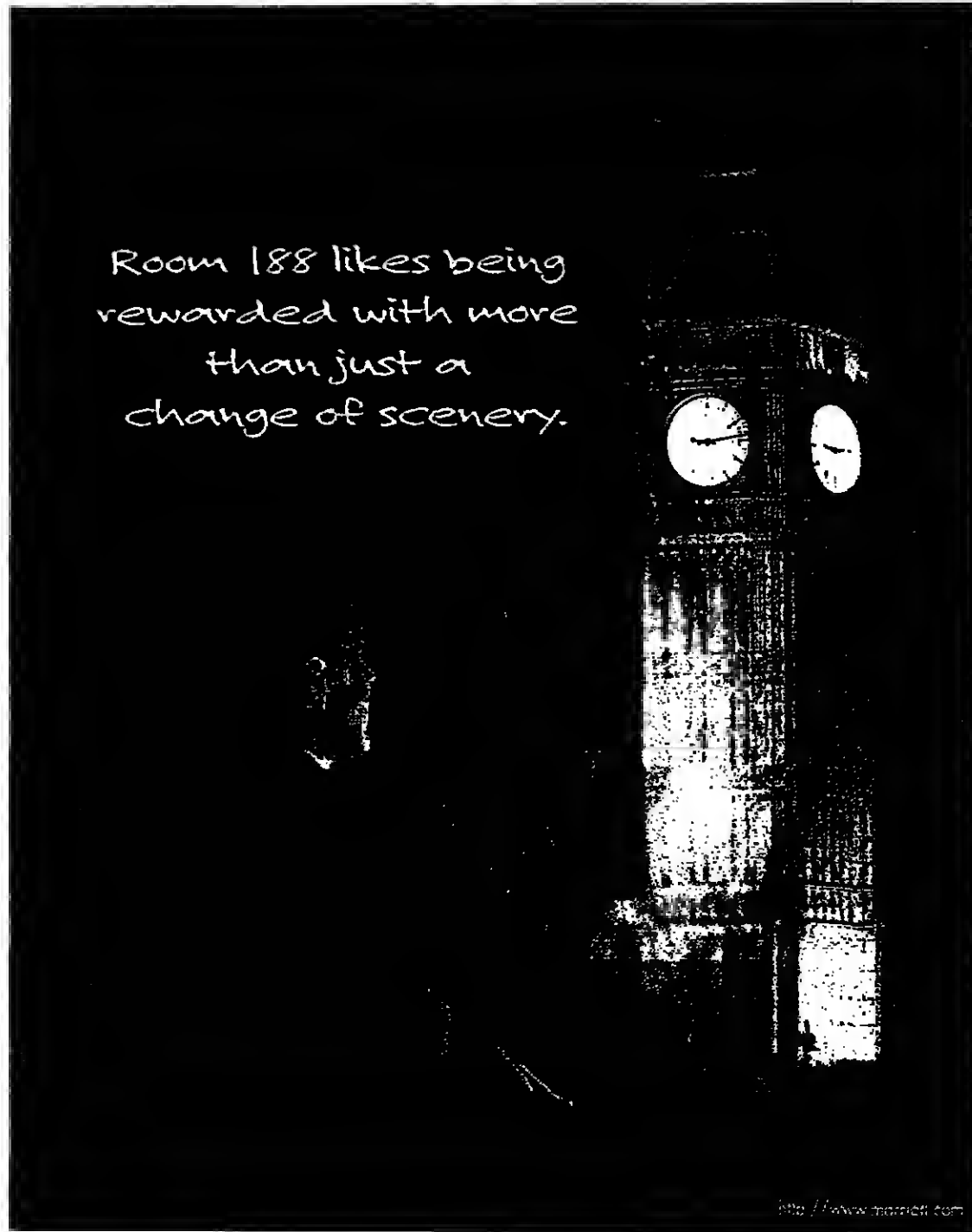
- 24 Loose cover to put notes in (8)
25 Press man's gone right in to find dealer (10)
26 Mean to be in Cologne area (4)

DOWN

- 1 Lively Congregationalist? (10)
2 Fitting guy into a pair (6)
3 Cheap way to travel overseas of course (8)
4 More than likely extra point's added (4-2)
5 Greek region's so divided (8)
6 Shore bird's harsh sound (4)
9 Subordinate ending up with agreement (13)
14 Fresh opportunity to reach final separation (5,5)
16 Scary marginal organisation (8)
17 Application coming from manufacturers (8)
19 Chance of foreign money order (6)
21 Know how to get in tax free (6)
23 Get master when head's away (4)

ACROSS

- 7 Freshwater fish on the menu daily (4)
8 Run and shouted out very loud (10)
10 A little late but proves to be sensational (4-4)
11 Upper class type follows directions to get going (3,3)
12 Translated phrase into Tibetan (6)
13 Give up when soldiers have a word with civil engineer (8)
15 Getting on first-class ocean frigate at sea (2,1,7,3)
18 Hearing test? (5,3)
20 Guess, it's wonderful (6)
22 Not entirely relevant to minor English composer (6)



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